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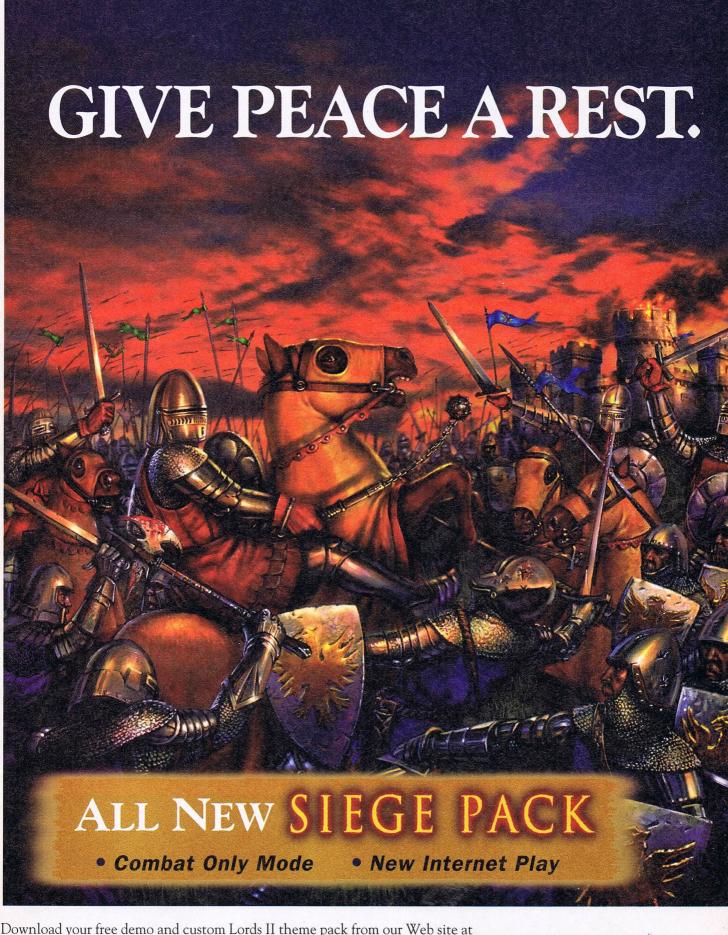


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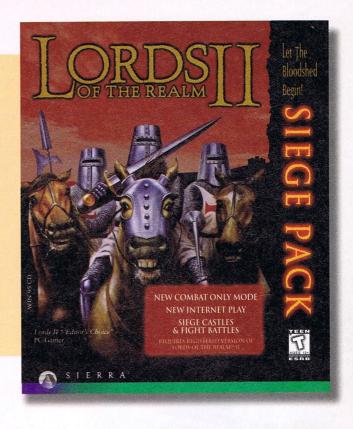
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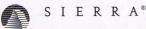
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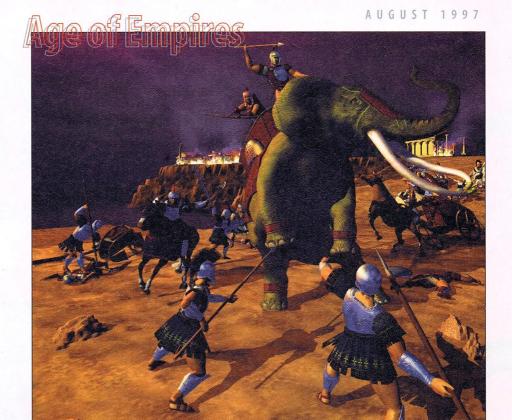
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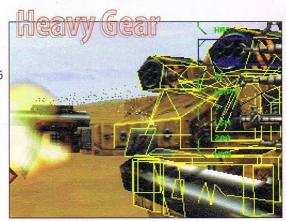
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review ratings

Classic ★★★★ Excellent ★★★★☆

Good ★★★☆☆

Fair ★★☆☆☆ Why? ★☆☆☆☆

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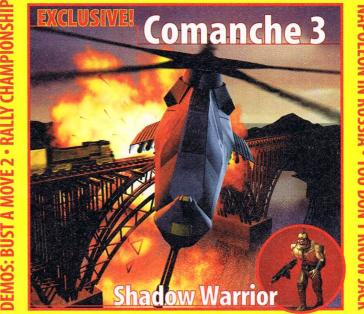
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CD

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Windows 95

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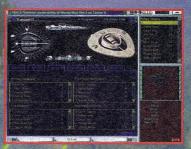
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The multiplayer fallacy

n the near future, you'll be playing every game on the Internet against thousands of fellow gamers. You'll click on a button, and you'll be in the game. There will be no need for online services – every company will offer their own matchmaking service for their products. You won't have to buy a CD-ROM in a store – you'll download the program from your high-speed connection to the net.

Products will be divided into two simple categories: action games and social experiences. Action games will include 3D shooters, flight simulators and real-time strategy games, whereas social games will include role-playing and traditional games (chess, checkers, etc.).

Is this a depressing scenario?

If you say no, turn the page. This article is a waste of your time. However, if you're a proponent of the single-player game experience, or are merely looking for more variety to your gameplay experiences, read on. I think we're headed down a scary path; however, we have the power to alter this bleak vision of the future.

There are a lot of flaws with pure online gaming. First up: cost. People aren't going to give this stuff away forever. How many of you are willing to spend \$10 a month to play a really great game? That sounds pretty cheap, until you consider the \$120 per year you'd end up spending on that one game. Factor in the number of games you buy on a yearly basis, and you're talking about a serious expense.

Hourly rates have already proven to be death for all but the most hardcore role-playing and simulation fans. Most of us can't enjoy any activity while the meter's running (just think of America Online and it's millions of users who switched to flat-rate as soon as it was made available).

You could try a free service that depends on advertising to make money. Unfortunately, study after study has shown how ineffectual web-based banner ads are, so why does anyone think this is a viable model? Why pay money to put your banner on a site, when half of the gaming sites will give you links for little to no money?

What about a single-payment solution like Kali? Pay \$20 and you get a matchmaking service and an emulator that allows you to play any IPX game over the TCP/IP-based Internet. It's a good deal, and with the claim of 100,00 registered users, it's bigger than TEN and Mpath combined. Unfortunately, there are a few black clouds hovering over Kali's future. There are competitors, from Kahn to Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone, and as everyone moves to native TCP/IP support and their own matchup services, Kali could become irrelevant.

Nothing here addresses the biggest multiplayer fallacy. Are there enough people actually interested in online gaming to make all of this work? According to Microsoft, 10% of the people who buy the boxed versions of their games play them over the Internet on the Internet Gaming Zone. Most industry people think the number is too high – most say it's closer to 3-5% of all purchasers. Obviously some games are skewed toward higher numbers (plenty of people play *Quake*, but anyone up for a game of *Powerslave*?).

What has convinced companies to include a feature that would only be used by such a small number of users? It's our fault. The press has been the most outspoken proponent of multiplayer gaming. We have networks that we use to play games with. You don't. We have fast Internet connections. You don't. We have the time and knowledge to actually get the damn things working. Well, maybe the knowledge, but not the time. Well, come to think of it, does anyone really understand TCP/IP...?

But the blame must be shared. Guess where companies get most of their feedback? Online. Guess where gamers interested in multiplayer hang out? Online. Despite the fact that they're in the minority, online users scream loudest for multiplayer support, which isn't surprising since these same people are already somewhat familiar with arcane setups and constantly crashing software. (The great fun of browsing the Internet – watching your beta version of Netscape crash on a page with frames, Java, or Shockwave apps).

These thoughts come a couple of weeks before the Electronic Entertainment Expo, in Atlanta. Our entire staff will be there, listening to every company representative explain how their online technology reduces lag time, or how they've figured out how to make money on Internet gaming. We'll also get to hear, over and over again, a company's "Internet strategy." Unfortunately, less effort will be spent on creating better games; instead, they'll focus their effort on trying to develop superior online communities around their underdeveloped products.

If you're upset with these developments, now is the time for action. Don't let the minority dictate the future of gaming. Let the companies know you don't want multiplayer games at the expense of excellent single-player experiences. Tell them to look up the sales figures of *Civilization II*, *Tomb Raider* and *MDK* when they say single-player games don't sell. Borrow the mantra from Peter Finch's character in Paddy Chayefsky's *Network*: "I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this any more."

-Steve Bauman, Editor



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Reprints available. Foreign reprint rights available
US Subscriptions Tel: 800 283-3542

or 760-745-2809 Fax: 760-745-7200 P.O. Box 469074 Escondido, CA 92046

One year (12 issues) without/with CD-ROM
Basic subscription rates US: \$19.95/\$31.95

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Canada: \$31.95(\$43.95)

Foreign: \$43.95(\$55.95 (US)

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Editorial Offices 2 Millet Street, Unit 2 Richmond, VT 05477 Tel: 802-434-3060

FAX: 802-434-6493

Editorial e-mail editor@cdmag.com

Subscription e-mail CD Tech Support e-mail editor@cdmag.com subscriptions@cdmag.com cgcdtech@cdmag.com

Back issues available from Tel: 800-699-4263

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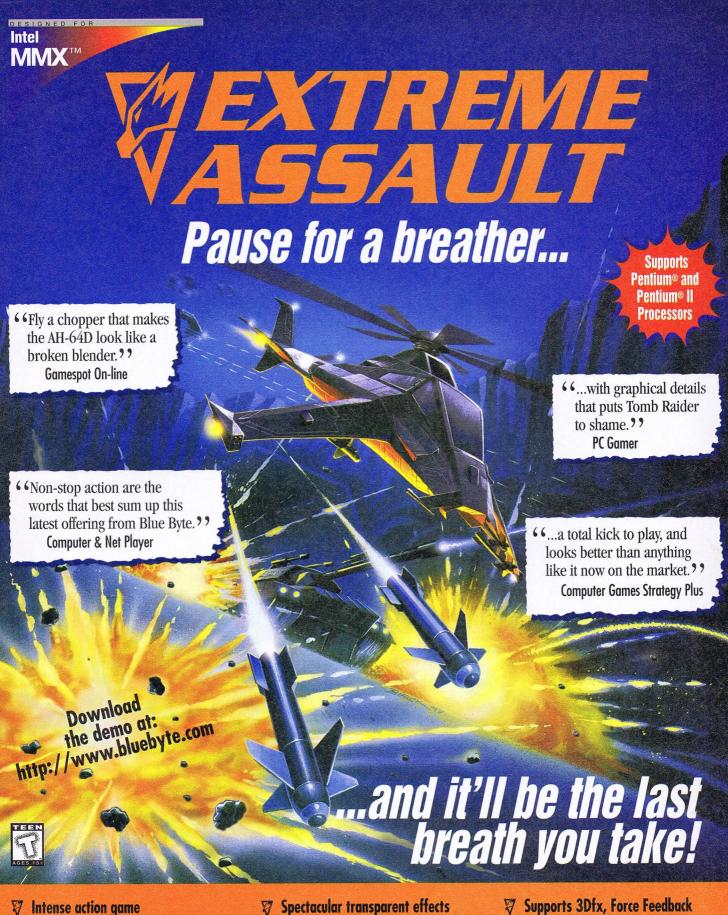




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F-22 wrestling match

Controversy over usage of plane's name, image in games

A STORY THAT STARTED WITH A TUSSLE over game names has ballooned into an industry-wide debate over attempts to control the representation of military vehicles in computer games. Early this year the Air Force unveiled the official name of their new F-22 air superiority fighter, the Raptor. Shortly thereafter,

both Interactive Magic and NovaLogic announced similar product names: iF-22 Raptor and F-22 Raptor, respectively. On the surface, things were quiet until mid-May, when Interactive Magic caused a furor by starting up an "F-22 debate forum" on their web site to discuss whether "any one game company should be able to obtain the exclusive right to the name and likeness of a military vehicle...."

They started the forum with an "open letter" to gamers wherein they said "we were informed by letter that NovaLogic is attempting to negotiate exclusive rights for the use of the plane's name, its likeness, photographs of it, and information about it." They later posted a portion of the letter, which was not from NovaLogic but from legal counsel for Lockheed Martin, the plane's manufacturer. The quoted portion (Interactive Magic would not release the entire document, saying their legal counsel had advised against it) references negotiations

with Novalogic "for exclusive use of the 'F-22' marks for interactive computer flight simulation games" and requests that Interactive Magic "remove all references to Lockheed Martin and all images of Lockheed Martin aircraft" from their software.

NovaLogic fired back, posting an "F-22

Revert 17

Raptor Trademark Statement" on their web site, wherein they stated that they "asked Interactive Magic not to infringe upon NovaLogic's trademark rights...." NovaLogic's John Garcia told *CGS+* that "the only correspondence we have ever had with Interactive Magic is that we have asked them to cease and desist, to change the title 'F-22 Raptor.'" He says that they "filed an intent to use with the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office on March 12th; [Interactive Magic] did the same on April 4th." Interactive Magic Representative Lynne

Beaman acknowledges that NovaLogic may have filed first, but says that, as they understand it, first application or use of the trademark on an actual product is what counts, and that they believe they were first in this regard.

Interactive Magic's Dave Murray says that the naming issue isn't their biggest concern,

> but that the representation of a military vehicle in a game is. They feel that NovaLogic is trying to work a deal that will exclude other publishers from ever using the F-22 in games. Garcia says that the only issue they have with Interactive Magic is over the name of their product; he says that they received "a very similar letter" from Lockheed Martin, and that was what triggered negotiations. The specifics of the

negotiations are yet to be worked out; when asked if, hypothetically, NovaLogic was able to gain exclusive rights to representations of the F-22 in games, would they exercise them against other companies, Garcia responded "I don't want to be put in a situation where I have to say what I would do *if*, because I don't know if it's going to happen; why limit my options? ... It's really an unfair question." He went on to say "[We] have no nefarious motive."

While much of the verbiage has been gen-

Activision Sins; id Quakes

The flood of new 3D shooters continues unabated

THE *QUAKE* ENGINE CONTINUES TO BE PUT to good use in Activision's upcoming *Sin*, developed by Hipnotic Interactive. Available for Windows 95 in early 1998, this 3D shoot-



The world of Sin

er will be set in the future where governments hire private security in order to put down the drug dealers and other bad dudes. You're the leader of a strike force, and you must discover the source of the crime epidemic (even money says it's a government conspiracy). Sin will feature six different environments that utilize the Quake engine's superior technology. It will also feature 16-bit color graphics without a 3D accelerator card (though it will support them).

Speaking of *Quake*, id has released some screen shots from *Quake* 2. id's John Carmack has talked a bit about it, and among the things under consideration for the game is dropping QuakeC, the built-in programming language, in favor of exporting the game logic to .DLL files. Doing this would,



Quake 2 shows off its new environments

according to Carmack, garner a 5-10% speed increase in game logic. The unfortunate side-effect would be that *Quake* hackers and level editors would have to compile their code on each platform.

According to Carmark, all of this is part of "making *Quake 2* a better *game*, as well as just a better mutliplayer virtual world." He goes on to say, "*Quake 1* was pretty messed up from a game standpoint, and we don't

While much of the verbiage has been generated by Interactive Magic and NovaLogic, there are other players in the story, both within the computer games industry and without. UK-based Digital Image Design, also working on an F-22 game (named TFX3-F22), has called for a friendly meeting between all interested parties, and, in a letter to and posted by Interactive Magic, Douglas Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, said "I believe the IDSA should seek approval from our varfous committees to take action to oppose Lockheed...." An anonymous source at another top simulation developer had this to say on this issue: "One thing that has already happened since this issue went public, and especially after the piece [about this situation] aired on CNN, is that the Defense Department has sent a letter to all of its people and instructed them to cease talking with all video-game companies until this issue is resolved. So an unwanted side-effect of this could be an increased difficulty in doing our research [for simulators] because of a government crackdown." Not clear at this point is the source within DOD of this letter, which none of the manufacturers are apparently willing to make public.

Lockheed Martin, a key player in the argument, has had little to say at this point. We spoke with Jeff Rhodes of Lockheed Martin Aerospace Systems public relations, and he told us that a corporate-level meeting on the issue is to be held just after this issue goes to press. He said he's worked with both publishers for months, but that "the lawyers got involved." He's not seen any of the legal communications, nor has he seen a letter to Lockheed Martin the Air Force has reportedly sent them.

We'll continue to track this story, both here in the pages of CGS+ and online at www.cdmag.com. –Scott Udell



Another look at Sin

plan on doing that again."

Part of that reasoning has dictated that there will be no more DOS games from id. "The advantages of good TCP/IP support, dynamic linking, powerful virtual memory, device drivers, etc., are just too much to overcome. Yes, all of those can be provided under DOS in various ways, but it just isn't worth it." So it's Windows 95 and NT for future id products. *Steve Bauman*

Hitting the hard-core

7th Level joins the ranks of those re-focusing on games

MOST GAMERS MAY NOT REALIZE IT YET, but 7th Level is doing their best to get the word out: they're now a company focused on gaming; while you might see an occasional edutainment title done for an outside publisher, their own internal core efforts revolve around games and game technologies.

Dominion

On the technology side of things, 7th Level certainly exhibits their strengths in this title; the graphics are excellent, the production values high, and everyone's got to love the interface. The whole *Dominion* team, however, did their best to reassure us that gameplay has not been forgotten either. Forces, while similar, have functional differences behind the graphical, and AI commanders can be assigned objectives like "take this



Dominion Attacking an energy barrier that's blocking the roadway into an enemy base

force and attack that objective"...and have them actually do it. Due out in August.

Return to Krondor

First previewed way back in our July '96 issue, work continues on Return to Krondor, a game based in Raymond E. Feist's Midkemia. Previously licensed to Sierra for their game Betrayal at Krondor, this representation of Midkemia is not so much a sequel as it is an entirely new game set in the same universe. It uses a new engine, and has a different story based on recognizable Feist characters. An RPG, it will be broken into ten distinct chapters; unlike Betrayal, characters, while they come and go, will never disappear completely in the game. All of the characters are 3D, and all encounters, be they discussions or combat, take place right on screen instead of in generic combat environments or 2D discussion trees. While your party will move through the world in realtime, the game switches to turn-based for combat. Due in October.

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

Continuing their successful Python franchise, this third game covers the first part of



Monty Python's The Meaning of Life Everybody's, uhhh, favorite, Mr. Creosote

the movie (Act I). Featuring more gameplay than the earlier titles, there should be plenty here to please Python fans: new Terry Gilliam artwork and characters, new audio from the five remaining original Pythons, even another lost scene cut from the original movie. At this early stage their was little to see gameplay-wise, but the 360 degree panoramic views of favorite movie scenes are already quite impressive. Games and puzzles will be incorporated into the Pythonesque quest for the meaning of life: Feed Mr. Creosote, You Don't Know John, Live Organ Transplants, etc. The game should ship in the 4th quarter.

The Gatherer

The Gatherer is a new action/adventure game that 7th Level calls a mixture of Quake's gameplay and Tomb Raider's beauty and vistas. In the game you play a soul who must gain absolution and freedom from Hell by recapturing ten demons who've escaped to locales throughout time, including ancient Egypt, medieval Crusades, Vietnam, and future space colonies. No gameplay was available yet, but the 3D character animation (demonstrated using the code that will animate the characters in the game) was quite impressive. 7th Level claims they'll get 640x480 gameplay at 65,000 colors without hardware acceleration, but just in case you have it the game will support MMX, major 3D boards, and even the Pentium II. -Scott Udell



Return to Krondor Your nemesis in Midkemia

AN EXPERIMENT IN CYBERDIVERSION:

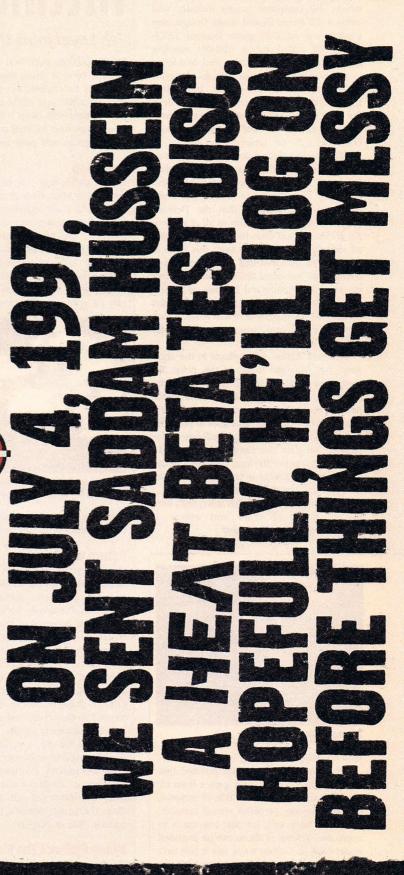
CYBERDIVERSION THEORY SAYS IF WE SATISFY OUR PRIMAL VIOLENT URGES ON THE WET, WE WON'T HAVE TO HURT PEOPLE IN REALITY! WITH THE HEAT INTERNET GAME WETWORK, WE CAN TEST OUR THEORY ON THE MOST PRIMALLY VIOLENT SPECIMEN THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER! ... HEAT" IS THE AMSMER!!

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We, the people, have made an example of Saddam Hussein! The aggressive and territorial actions of nations and their leaders will NO LONGER BE TOLERATED on this planet! With the coming of CyberDiversion Science and the creation of the HEAT internet game network,

here can be no excuses for this sort of behavior

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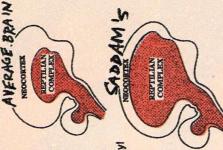


40THER OF ALL R-COMPLEXES! BIVERT IT TO HEATHET, MILLIONS WILL BE SAVED! DERY IT, AMP Yery brain has a reptilian complex that makes us fight over oil and pay bag MONEY FOR CAGED WRESTLING MATCHES ON CLOSED CIRCUIT TY! IN SHORT, SADDAN'S IS THE

HEAT IS THE ANSWER!! JE SHALL PERISH! ...

5.8 billion Reptillan Complexes in the world, all crying out for aggression and territoriality! With these in mind, particularly the abnormally gargantuan ones like Saddam's, the DON'T YOU SEE, IT'S HEAT.NET OR WORLD DESTRUCTION?!! There are HEAT internet game network has been infused WITH MASSIVE

and destruction that will render even the most well-endowed R-Complexes docile! With <u>TOURNAMENTS AND REWARDS</u> for Optimum Diversion Release (ODR)—meaning when people log on to HEAT.NET, they'll encounter a level of aggression HEAT.NET, Saddam may survive to lead a semi-normal life! Without HEAT.NET, none of us may survive... PRAY HE LOGS ON BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!!



DON'T JUST SIT THERE! HELP BROTHER SADDAM OVERCOME HIS WEAKNESS!!! LOG ON TO HEAT.NET! BOOT OP YOUR FAVORITE MULTI-PLAYER CO-ROM WITH HEAT, YOU CAN RULE THE WORLD WITH-OUT SHEDDING AN OUNCE OF BLOOD OR LEAVING SO MUCH AS A BRUSE!! ... **HEAT IS THE AMSWER!**

LIVES CAN BE SAVED IF YOU DIVERT YOUR PRIMAL AGGRESSIONS ONTO HEA'

multi-player CD-ROM game, and for FREE you can JOIN THE MILLIONS HELPING TO KICK THAT CRAZY IRAQUI'S REPTILIAN RUMP!! On HEAT.NET, you can guage-- the madder he gets, the more he'll play! Suddenly, he'll feel lighter, happiert chainsaw him in half, rip off his head, taunt him with dirty words in his native lan-Get up NOW, log onto HEAT.NET, boot up your favorite

only on HEAT, or games like Blood** and Quake*** that are already amongst the masses! (Just to be safe, we've made it possible for Saddam to play almost every multi-player PC game on HEAT!)

Blood

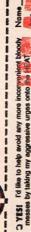
Scud

Help Saddam diverthis precious violent urges NOW with games like ScudTM and HEAT Warz, TM

of them will matter! And you'll manage to achieve what hundreds of diplomats and thousands of tons of warheads failed to do: MAKE SADDAM All the U.N. troops poised on his border, the Kurds, the defectors, none

CURB HIS AGGRESSIONS AND BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EASTI!! HEAT IS THE ANSWER.



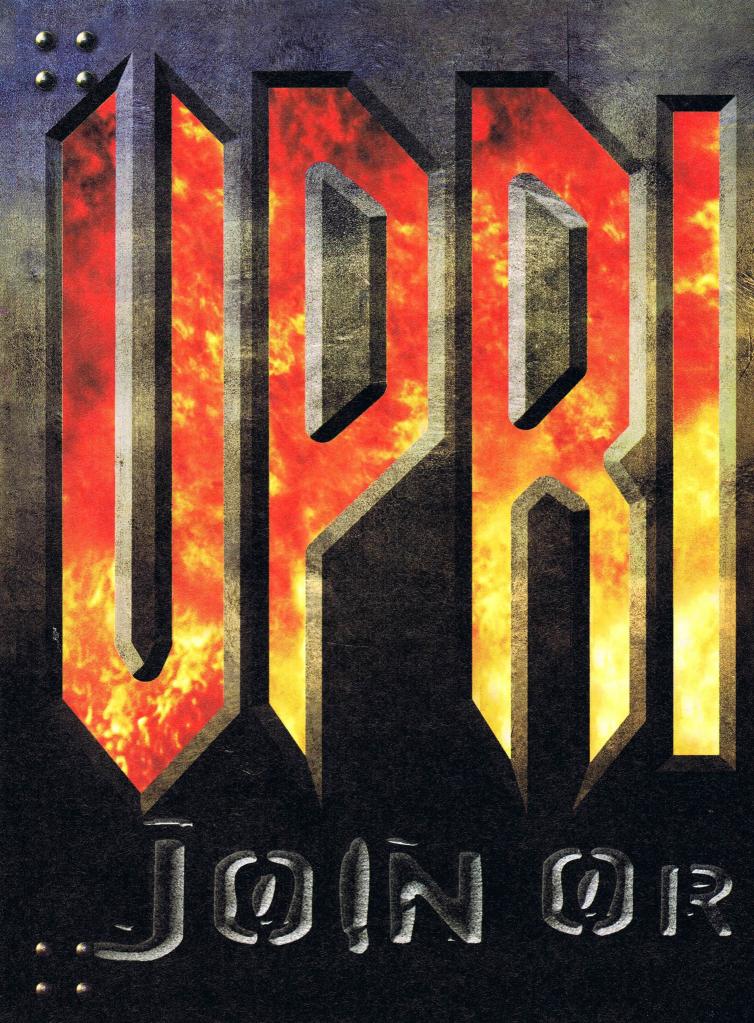


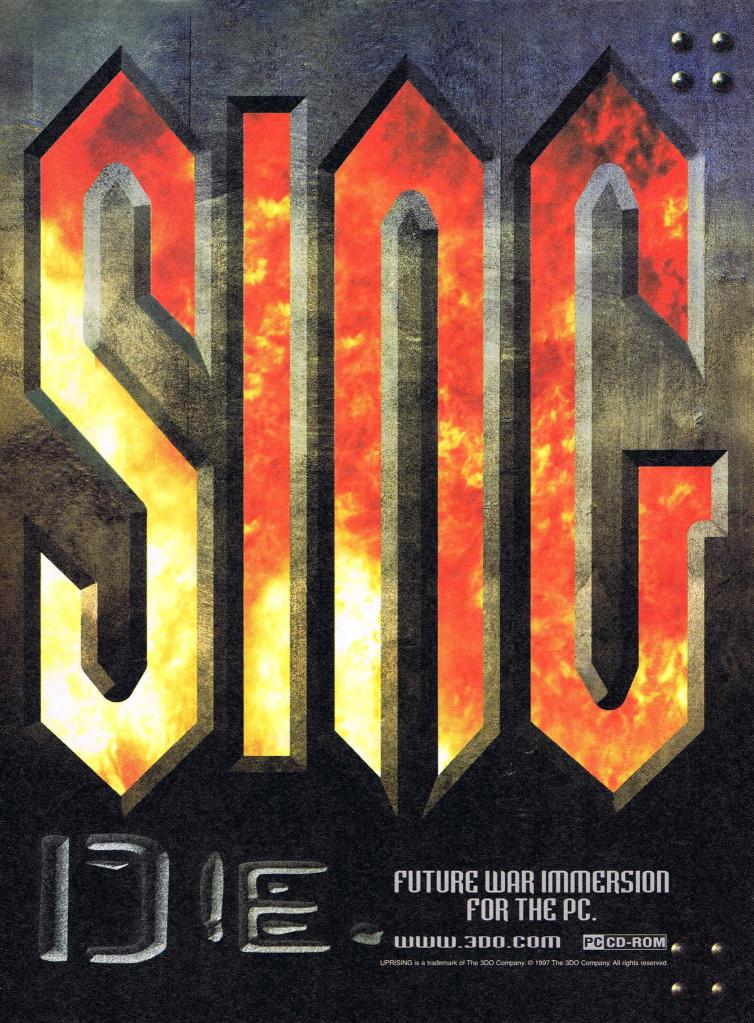
O NO! I'm a grumpy old genocidal dictator who

internet game network! Please send me mo

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COPY THIS FLYER AND SPREAD THE WORDIII HELP SAVE THE WORLD!





Might and Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven

Finally, the folks at New World reconvene the queen of the Xeen scene

series has been one of the most beloved of role-playing fans worldwide, and another chapter is scheduled to see the light of day late this fall. *The Mandate of Heaven* – this refers to the divine right to rule that is granted from on-high to sanction the worthiness of individuals and families to retain power over periods of time. The Ironfist Dynasty is finding

It's the legendary Might and Magic library

that its time is running out, however.

After the Good King Roland made himself scarce (!?), Prince Nicolai Ironfist has had a bit of a problem with the populace. Floods, earthquakes and an invasion of demons from the sky have led a doomsday group to speculate that the Ironfist Dynasty may have lost their divine rights, and that the end of the world is nigh. You will strive to make things right, or

die trying.

You'll lead a party of four adventurers in a non-linear sequence of quests that differs from the Chapter by Chapter approach we have been used to. Characters are completely customizable, giving you a chance to create a completely unique party each time you play. Over 100 NPCs enjoy enhanced AI; they become effected by your actions, their own "self interest" or dozens of other factors.

New technologies include the Horizon engine, used for outdoor environments, which offers 360-

used the term "QA" rather than "QC." Sorry, Zippy. And finally, gulp, you can't really ride the llamas... Sid Meier working on Gettysburg game



Tavern keepers provide a hefty shoulder

degree movement in all directions including vertical (eat your heart out Peter Pan); and the Labyrinth engine, which combines point light sourcing and true 3D rendered sprites for a realistic indoor experience. M&M withdrawal is almost a thing of the past. —Cindy Yans

Might and Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven • New World Computing Windows 95



Half-Life

Sources at Origin have confirmed the rumors that Sid Meier's next game, and first for Firaxis, will be Sid Meier's Gettysburg, a real-time wargame. It will be shown to the press behind closed doors at the upcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo. Meier, creator of

'Cause they couldn't afford a full one

BRIEFS: Errata – A few corrections to last month's feature about *Ultima Online*: The *Ultima*

VI engine was used as a basis for an early prototype of the game; the current project was built

from the ground up. Zippy Zinser, QA (Quality Assurance) project leader, would like us to have

crowd favorite, the *Quake* engine. Who hasn't licensed it yet? Sierra is the latest to put it to good use, signing an agreement with developer Valve to distribute their upcoming game *Half-Life*. It's described as a "revolutionary leap in 3D first-person games," one that combines action with exploration and strategy. The game world will be populated by monsters and friendly creatures, so it won't be a matter of running around blasting everything.



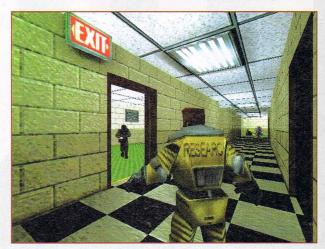
The always frightening "dog-like creature with a weird head"

The plot puts you in the shoes of a person assigned to an experiment at a decommissioned missile base. After you make a discovery, things go awry, and you have to fight your way past a bunch of alien monsters to the surface. Once there, you'll discover that a battle has erupted between the aliens and the government. Unfortunately, the government wants to silence you as well, so it's you against the world.

Technological advances

in *Half-Life* include 16-bit color graphics, colored lighting, and effects such as translucency, dynamic textures and metallic surfaces. It will support OpenGL, Direct3D and MMX. Network support has been expanded to 32 players over the Internet.

A proprietary character animation system is said to give higher polygon counts in characters and more fluid character animation. An



Pretty impressive environment, eh?

advanced AI promises enemies that work in groups and utilize strategic movement and ambushes.

The team from Valve is made up of 3D shooter veterans, which makes *Half-Life* one to watch out for. We'll see if it has a life when it's released in November (presumably of 1997). –*Steve Bauman*

Half-Life · Sierra · Windows 95

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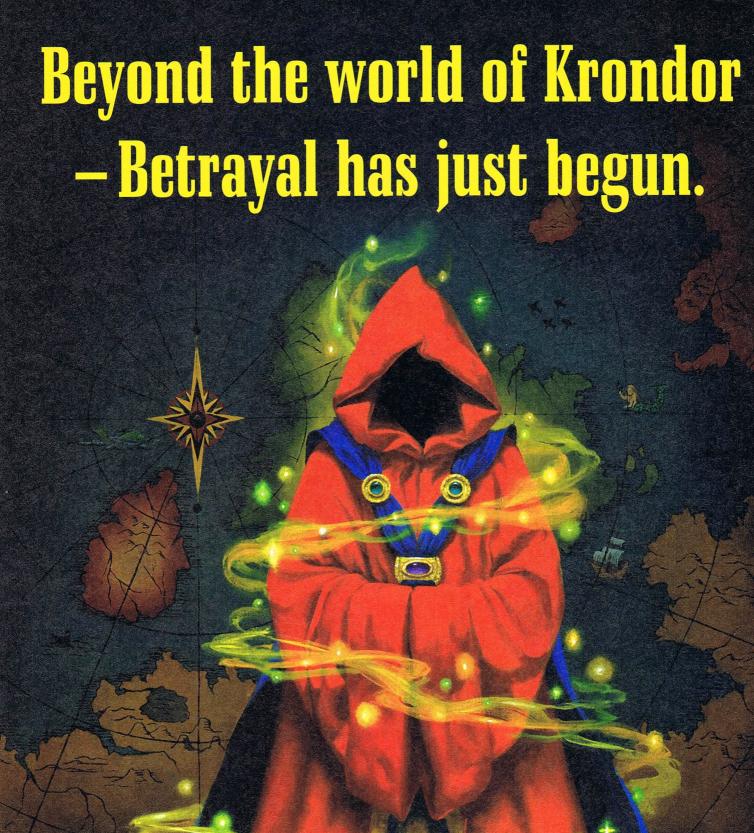


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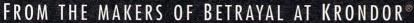
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Black Dahlia

Occult, horror, murder, fun

22-year-old actress named Elizabeth Short was brutally murdered, severed at the waist, all blood and organs removed with an ear-to-ear grin carved into her face. Investigators of the crime nicknamed the unfortunate girl The Black Dahlia, supposedly because of her fascination with the color black (dyed her hair black, wore black clothes, blacked out her front teeth – uh, scratch the last one).

Some have linked Short's death to the early 1940's Cleveland murders by the so-called Torso



Pearson discovers occult symbols

Slayer, supposedly America's first modern serial killer. Take2 follows up last year's rather gruesome serial-killer-based game, *Ripper*, with a story based on these bizarre and disturbing events; and has enhanced it further with occult themes based upon beliefs of certain "Fifth Column" members of Hitler's Wehrm.

Column" members of Hitler's Wehrmacht.

You are Jim Pearson, U.S. investigator of subversive activities for the newly formed

subversive activities for the newly formed Office of the Coordinator of Information. Your delving into potential "Fifth Column" affairs in the Midwest lead you on a trek through over 60 locations including those in Cleveland, Europe and LA, racing to catch a killer in the process of a horrifying cult ritual. Over 75 puzzles, visual, logical and arcade-style will provide a broad spectrum to players, although we *still* wonder what arcade sequences are doing in straight adventure games. A 360-degree panning engine and 3D rendered SVGA graphics look similar to the world of *Zork Nemesis*.



Aha! A rendered risqué lobby

A cast of professionals, including Hollywood talent (Dennis Hopper) will perform in this light-hearted romp through murderous evil and torture. As you may have guessed, the product contains mature subject matter. –Cindy Yans

Black Dahlia · Take 2 · Windows 95



Aha! A rendered barroom

vs. turn-based" discussion, he said, "We have nothing against turn-based strategy games,

but this first game is real-time because the topic really deserves it. The next game may not be

Railroad Tycoon and **Civilization**, has long been rumored to be working on such a game, only its original design was allegedly broader, focusing on the entire Civil War. **Firaxis' Jeff Briggs** said, "I'm really excited by Sid's game; since **Civilization**, this is the first original game

from him, and it's coming along great. The game itself is a whole lot of fun – a totally unique game. It's real-time, I guess you can call it a strategy game, but it's not at all like Command & Conquer or Warcraft II. As for the "real-time"

Defiance

Action gaming... from Avalon Hill?

"Avalon Hill," they think strategy games and – most especially – hardcore wargames. Reach back in computer gaming history (back to when system requirements read "disk or cassette"), however, and you'll find that Avalon Hill did dabble a tad in action games – but "tad" is the key word, as they soon left off almost all computer game development, rejoining it in force only a few years ago. The re-entry, however, focused on strategy and wargaming, so it comes as some surprise that one of the titles they're most excited about is

Escape the city via this cramped, Descent-like maintenance shaft

an action game called *Defiance*, under development at Logicware (the folks who developed *AstroRock*, amongst other titles).

Avalon Hill says *Defiance* will combine a lot of the action of *Descent* with a fully realized storyline (a.k.a. *Wing Commander*) and a touch of strategizing (you knew they had to slip that in there somewhere). The story is a familiar one: you're the pilot in the first test flight of a new "personal assault vehicle," the LIV-6 SABRE. Just as you are finishing the flight the domed city you are testing in is attacked by a force of previously unknown alien creatures; defenses are overwhelmed, the populace is dead or in hiding, and command and control is all but gone – you're all that's left.

You fly your craft through a 3D world that mixes the confines of *Descent* with broader city-scapes underneath the huge dome. Your craft is, of course, armed

with an impres-

sive array of

weapons, which

you'll need as

Your enemies are a cyborg mix of manufactured weapons and nasty-tempered bio-forms



Out underneath the dome of your city, you encounter the aliens first hand; notice the wreck of a military helicopter and the destroyed buildings

you get out of the military proving grounds and face the impressive might of the enemy invasion.

The folks at Avalon Hill seem very excited about *Defiance*, more so in fact than they've been about any of their other recent releases. We'll get a chance to judge their return to action sometime this Fall. –*Scott Udell*

Defiance • Avalon Hill • Windows 95

Dungeons & Dragons



Trapped between good and evil, you'll find yourself at...

Baldur's Gate

"...one of the most anticipated RPG titles for the PC"
- Next Generation Online

The Adventure Begins this October.













Temüjin: The Capricorn Collection

The Riddle of Master Lu meets Video Reality

real-time – it's whatever works for the game."... Id takes Quake II to Activision – Activision

has has acquired the worldwide distribution rights to id's upcoming Quake II. This is the fourth id title to be distributed by Activision, after the first two Quake Mission Packs and the

FIRST LOOK SOUTH PEAK INTERACTIVE, which was founded last year under the auspices of SAS Institute, Inc., will debut their Video Reality Technology in the psychological thriller, Temüjin: The Capricorn Collection. Screenwriter Lee Sheldon, who authored the critically acclaimed title, The Riddle of Master Lu in addition to his work on numerous television series, did some touch-up



The mating of scorpions

work on the final script for the project.

Centuries ago, an ancient evil was safely cached. Now, the force that enslaved a continent lies somewhere beneath the floor of the Stevenson Museum. Temüjin, who was better known to the world as Ghengis Khan, comprises an mystical force that targets the player as he or she explores the museum and wades through Kahn's treasures to unlock a secret that will quell the archaic diabolism. The only things that are clear are that the Capricorn, a jeweled goat head, lies at the center of the mystery, and that if you don't stop it, whatever it is, the next artifact will be your

Players will navigate in a 360-degree world and view 35mm cinematics with no rendered backgrounds. More than 100 interactive, 3D objects are available throughout.

More touted than the game itself at this point is South Peak's Video Reality technology

upcoming Hexen II. Quake II will sport improved AI, non-linear worlds, improved lighting effects, and will be released for Windows 95 and NT



Framing the Swiss cheese canopy

that incorporates characters and sets (filmed with standard Hollywood production techniques) into computer gaming environments. This system is said to eliminate choppy jumps to video clips, get rid of pixelation and reconfigure the game based on the hardware of each host, as well as to serve as a completely integrated game design system. But can it "core a apple?" -Cindy Yans

Temüjin: The Capricorn Collection · SouthPeak Interactive • Windows 95

Evolution

accompany them on their current PopMart tour - Lara Croft, star of Eidos' Tomb Raider. The tour, a multimedia extravaganza featuring the world's largest video screen, a giant lemon and Where intelligence is the end

FIRST LOOK WELL OVER 10 YEARS ago, on his journey between Avalon Hill and MicroProse, veteran designer Al Roireau conceptualized a strategy game, the premise of which would be to evolve over centuries from primordial ooze into some form of intelligent life. Finally, with the help of Discovery Channel Multimedia and Crossover Technologies, this concept will be realized, and Evolution (joining the horde of realtimers) is planned for release later this year.

One CD-ROM spanning 360 million years what a concept. Here's the scenario: Each

interface with map view

game can contain up to six players (missing humans are replaced by AI opponents) striving to be the first to achieve intelligence. You initially control a primitive terrestrial choanate, and the goal is to develop the species, bring them to an area where climate



Mammoth dancing

and terrain will allow them to thrive, and eventually you will have choices about which species you wish to evolve into next. The choices follow a deep tree structure (the Tree of Life) and only one player may develop any particular species (over 150 3D animated species exist).

Acanthostega has lovely purple stripes

4.0 only... Lara Croft on tour with U2 - Irish rockers U2 have invited a famous woman to

All the while your opponents are doing the same, trying to develop predators that will destroy your species, or perhaps more efficient ones that will develop faster; centuries fly by and continents shift (makes for interesting migration). From time to time natural disasters occur. It's a ripe playing field for realtime, and its world is tiled as a 3D sphere represented by an "unfolded" twenty sided polyhedron (icosahedron), which will appear to the player very similar to the usual hex-tiled map. Primogenitors may play solo, network or head-to-head. An amazing amount of research by Crossroads developer Greg Costikyan should provide realistic historical perspective.

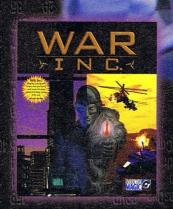
Why haven't we seen something quite like this before? Hard to say, but we hope it will have been worth the wait. -Cindy Yans

Evolution • Discovery Channel Multimedia Windows 95

Good Employees
are hard to come by...



..тhey're also hard to keep al ve.





real-time strategy that gets down to business

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Byzantine: The Betrayal First Planet Explorer CD-ROM debuts

FIRST LOOK JOHN HENDRICKS, chairman and CEO of Discovery Communications, has been the company's true visionary from the get-go. One of his latest product lines, Planet Explorer, is aimed at providing the ability to explore and experience mysterious and fascinating locations as realistically as possible. Byzantine: The Betrayal will be Discovery's biggest budget title ever as it takes players to Istanbul (not Constantinople) in an adventure mystery filled with international intrigue, murder and deception.



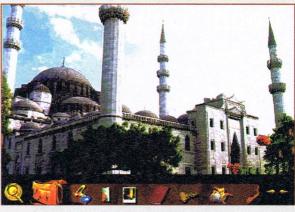
The skyline of Istanbul (not Constantinople)

The title was shot on location in Istanbul, Turkey, and utilizes original photography as well as 3D-rendered models. Over 40 live actors will appear, many of whom were recruited right in Istanbul (some of the dialogue was delivered simply via the assistance of phonetics coaching). You'll meet Akalin, a police detective

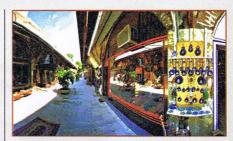
whose investigative activities might indict you, Neda, whose cautious silence may say more than words, and many others.

You are in search of your friend Emre, whose invitation to join him in his investigation of a smuggling ring was immediately followed by his disappearance. In your search for him, you will explore Istanbul's alleyways, palaces, mosques, and bazaars in over 120 locations, interacting with over 150 inventory items. The graphics engine offers a 360-degree panoramic view, and the game is optimized

One of Discovery's only titles aimed at the serious gaming community, Byzantine will be



Mysterious mosques abound



Merchants have deserted their wares

on the shelves this fall in French, German, Japanese, Spanish and English, to be followed by Chinese, Italian, Korean and Portuguese. -Cindy Yans

Byzantine: The Betrayal · Discovery Channel Multimedia • Windows 95

martini glass, is billed as "the most expensive tour ever." The 14 month, \$120 million world tour kicked off in Las Vegas on April 25, 1997... I-Magic announces Q4 releases - I-Magic has announced their end-of-year lineup, and it's spread across the spectrum: two sims

Milia '97

(iPanzer '44 and iF-16 Viper), a wargame (Great Battles of Hannibal), and an action shooter (Shattered Reality)... Toys R Them - Hasbro will continue to bring toy and boardgame conversions to your PC, but they're also branching out a bit. Heading up their action lineup are action games: H.E.D.Z., Beastwars (based on the toys and cartoon), and a remake of the classic arcade game Frogger.

The French throw a multimedia party in Cannes

THOSE FRENCH KNOW HOW TO DO STYLE. and a lot of it was evident at Milia, a multimedia conference in Cannes, France. A three-day showcase of conferences and products, it was dominated by a few home-grown developers -UbiSoft with their knockout racing game Pod [reviewed in CGS+ 79] and Cryo Interactive, with their upcoming games Atlantis: The Lost Tales and Dragon Lore II.



Dragon Lore II

Cryo has been a developer for a number of years, but will be launching games under their own name in the U.S. for the first time. First up, with distribution from Interplay, is Dragon Lore II, a sequel to the popular adventure that was released by Mindscape in 1995. In the game, the Hordes from the Land of Nightmares are ready to attack, and The Dragon Prince has dubbed you a Dragon Knight. But a lord challenges your status, because every Dragon Knight must have a dragon, and

you've misplaced yours. Over the course of the game, you'll need to find your dragon and fight for your honor. Dragon Lore II promises over 80 hours of gameplay (much of which will be spent ogling the beautiful landscapes).

Their other upcoming title is Atlantis: The Lost Tales, another incredibly gorgeous



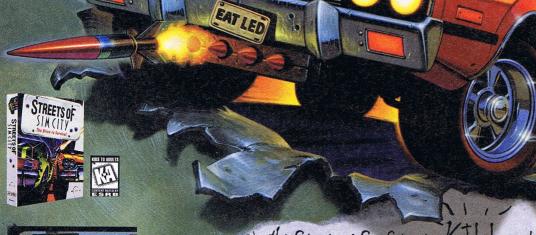
Atlantis: The Lost Tales

graphic adventure set in the underwater universe. You control Seth, who has to investigate the Queen while managing to explore a bunch of "mysterious" machines and unpredictable people.

Expect both of these games later this year. -Tina Brozen

YOUR MIDDLE FINGER HAS
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FOR TOO LONG



On the Streets of SimCity, it is KILL or be ROADKILL.

so forget the CRUDE hand gesture & try a flaming missile up the tailpipe.

Drive one of 5 Mely loaded Deat H machines. Hurl SMoke screens from a

MUSCLE car. Toast your enemies with machine gun blasts from a LETHAL

bread truck And turn uppusing road warriors into SCRAP METAL in

every city scenario—even imported simcities. Or give them

a crash course in Head-on network play. Because on the

STREETS of SimCity, you've got to DRIVE to SURVIVE.



IN X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER
YOU WILL BATTLE
HEAD-TO-HEAD AGAINST

AN ENEMY MORE RUTHLESS THAN

JABBA THE HUTT

AND MORE SINISTER THAN

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Today it's Floyd. Tomorrow, the greatest pilot in the *Star Wars*® universe could be a dentist in New Jersey. That's the beauty of **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter**™. It allows you to engage in head-to-head combat against real people over modem, network and the internet . It's a real first, and it's in real time. The graphics have been galactically enhanced. The flight











(Floyd from Accounting.)

engine is phenomenal. The new missions are masterstrokes of space mayhem. There's even single player campaigns for an all-new explosive experience. No wonder *Computer Gaming World* proclaims **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter** "number one on every space sim-er's wish list." And if you don't believe them, just ask Floyd. http://www.lucasarts.com











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RECENT ARTICLE IN ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY HYPOTHESIZED THAT TELEVISION IS IN AN ARTISTIC DECLINE BECAUSE MODERN WRITERS AND PRODUCERS ARE ONLY ABLE TO USE PAST TV SHOWS AS THE BASIS FOR THEIR CURRENT PROJECTS. IT WAS ARGUED THAT THE ORIGINAL TV INNOVATORS USED MULTIPLE SOURCES, FROM LITERATURE TO THEATER, FOR THEIR INSPIRATION, WHEREAS TODAY'S EXECUTIVES ARE TRYING TO CREATE THE NEXT FRIENDS BY DUPLICATING THE FORMULA OF SUCH "CLASSICS" AS THREE'S COMPANY.

AGE OF EMPIRES

This complaint could be leveled the PC game industry as well. We're faced with a lot of designs "inspired" by the previous year's hit, created by designers who last year were copying the previous year's console side-scrolling platform games. The current "design du copy" is the real-time strategy game, a genre that has existed for many years (at least as far back as Populous and the original SimCity), but with the enormous success of Warcraft II and Command & Conquer has exploded into the public consciousness. Of the 50 or so real-time strategy games coming out in 1997 [see this month's Command Post for "The List"], most won't be very good. They'll get the graphics right, and possibly add a few new wrinkles here and there, but they'll lack that certain something, whatever it may be, that Blizzard and Westwood imbued in their games. Most will fall down in the most important areas - play balancing and playability, which will be due, in part, to the lack of experience that the developers possess in creating PC strategy games.

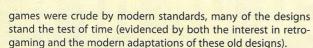
This is one of many reasons why Microsoft's *Age of Empires* stands out. While it is a real-time strategy game that's strongly influenced by *Warcraft* in particular, its developer, Ensemble Studios, has the kind of experience you can't buy in this industry. You may not know them, but you've heard of the games that Ensemble's Bruce Shelley, the main designer of the project, has worked on. He co-designed, with Sid Meier, two of the finest strategy games ever created, *Railroad Tycoon* and *Civilization*. It's his involvement with this project, and his background and track record as a game designer, that makes *Age of Empires* such a promising product.

AGE OF EXPERIENCE

In the golden age of game design (the 1980s) the innovators were more often than not influenced by the board games and pen-and-paper RPGs from companies like Avalon Hill and TSR. They learned to make do with less, and while the

CIVILIZATION MEETS WARCRAFT IN

MICROSOFT'S BOLDEST GAME TO DATE



Bruce Shelley is one of those innovators. Much of his gaming experience came, as it did for many past designers, while in college. As a graduate student in Economics at the University of Virginia during the glorious 70s, he was a boardgamer who spent hours, days, months playing games like *Squad Leader*. Shelley went on to found Iron Crown Games, which developed a pen-and-paper RPG based on J.R.R. Tolkien's *Middle Earth* books, and eventually ended up working for boardgame publishers SPI and Avalon Hill.

While at Avalon Hill, Shelley helped design the boardgame 1830, which was the obvious inspiration for Railroad Tycoon. He eventually moved over to their computer game division, where his main project was a computer version of Wooden Ships and Iron Men. Around this time, a few of his co-workers were moving over to an expanding company in Hunt Valley, Maryland called MicroProse.

Shelley thought it was time to move on after he saw one their products: Sid Meier's classic *Pirates!*. "A friend of mine had it for his Commodore 64," Shelley said wistfully, "and after I saw it I thought, 'Wow, I want to work at a company that produces cool games like this.'" In February of 1988, Shelley went to MicroProse, where he stayed for five years, working on numerous products and writing many of their manuals. His two biggest projects were the ones that he co-designed with Sid Meier, *Railroad Tycoon* and *Civilization*.

After Railroad Tycoon, Meier and Shelley decided to pick the biggest topic, the grand topic. You can't get much grander than trying to make a strategy game that covered an entire civilization ("and mixed in some Empire," according to Shelley). That game, Sid Meier's Civilization, is arguably the finest strategy game ever created. Shelley is justifiably proud of that game, and that design has been the blueprint for most grand strategy games since. Shelley ended up leaving MicroProse in 1993 and for the next couple of years, he worked on strategy guides for Prima.

Sometime in 1995, as the number of strategy guide assignments was in decline, Shelley started getting calls from an old acquaintance Tony Goodman, who'd established a consulting firm called Ensemble Corp. Goodman kept bugging him about computer gaming, with questions about the game business and design. Eventually, Ensemble Studios was started, and Shelley came on board.

At this point, they came up with the design for the game that would become *Age of Empires*. Even then, it was decided that the game would be real-time (influenced, in part, by the original

Warcraft), it would share with Civilization the goal of having a "big" topic, it would be a Windows 95 application with multiplayer support, and Shelley would use many of the design philosophies that he'd picked up from his experience working with Sid Meier.

AGE OF DESIGN

When you start to examine the design for *Age of Empires*, it doesn't really jump out at you. In the most basic sense, you control a group of units, gather resources that allow you to build more units and structures, fight battles, research new technologies, and try to win the game.

After playing the game for a few minutes, it's clear that it possesses a number of subtle details that set it apart. The scenario editor, which is integrated into the main menu of the game, is an incredibly powerful tool, giving gamers the ability to create special maps (up to 200x200), add neutral units (find them first and they're yours), set winning conditions (using and/or logic, allowing true multiple winning conditions, e.g., "conquer and find ruin or get X gold and X wood), link multiple scenarios together into a campaign, set the computer aggressiveness and intelligence, and even create splash screens with graphics and video clips.

Unlike many modern games, the single-player experience is as well-developed as the multiplayer game. The design calls for a 32 scenario campaign utilizing multiple civilizations that will be based on historical and mythological events. An as-yet-undetermined number of individual scenarios will be included to test your mettle, and the game can generate random scenarios with any number of computer-controlled civilizations.

The campaigns will not be dynamic, and you will not be able to carry units over from scenario to scenario. However, many of the individual scenarios will, like many competitors, have you starting with established bases and have to complete some task, such as retrieving a certain item, in order to "win" the scenario. Some of the early names for the campaigns include such intriguing titles as "The Glory of Greece," "The Rise of Egypt," and "Voices of Babylon." There will be a total of four campaigns, each comprising eight scenarios.

AGE OF MULTIPLAYER

All of this talk about the solo game doesn't mean that multiplayer has been neglected. Quite the contrary – *Age of Empires* was designed from day one for serious multiplayer action. Two to eight players can compete on either specially designed multiplayer maps or on randomly generated ones.

Adding to the fun of multiplayer are alliances and cooperative modes that move the game beyond pure deathmatches

Note the beautifully detailed city graphics

The importance of developing siege weapons cannot be overstated





ANEW BREED OF RPG



The Unnatural nation and thout wa fields.

In late then

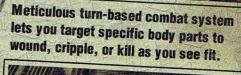
State-of-the-art digital animation lets you Watch someone small

State-of-the-art digital animation lets you see the emotions of the people you talk to. Watch someone smile at your compliment or grow angry at your insults! Your decisions will have significant moral implications.

6, China attacks Alaska over drops of oil in the world. force, but it will be ten years r. In a desperate maneuver, eighboring countries in dling resources. The ded by late 2076. S military ly 2077.

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Over 50 mini-quests with multiple solutions take you through devastated wastelands such as Rad Scorpion dens, Junktown, and the Brotherhood of Steel.

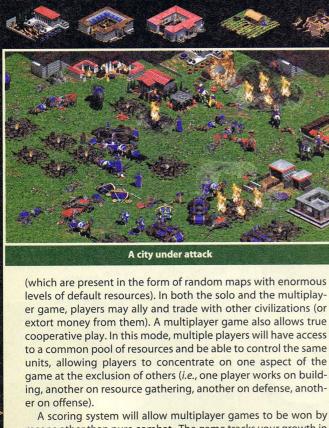


Victims don't just perish they get cut in half, melt into a pile of goo, and explode like a blood sausage into chunks of flesh.

ARRIVING AUGUST 1997

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A parade through your town

levels of default resources). In both the solo and the multiplayer game, players may ally and trade with other civilizations (or extort money from them). A multiplayer game also allows true cooperative play. In this mode, multiple players will have access to a common pool of resources and be able to control the same units, allowing players to concentrate on one aspect of the game at the exclusion of others (i.e., one player works on building, another on resource gathering, another on defense, anoth-

means other than pure combat. The game tracks your growth in military might, economics, religion, exploration (which is tied to the discovery of ruins) and science. Each of the civilizations get different bonuses in each of these areas, so you can focus your play toward certain areas at the expense of others and still win the game.

Like all Microsoft products, the Internet Gaming Zone will allow free matchmaking services for budding Empire builders, but direct TCP/IP play will be possible for those on other services. The

game utilizes DirectPlay, so expect support for modems and null-modem cables as well.

AGE OF GAMEPLAY

You control one of twelve civilizations, each with its own strengths and weaknesses (see sidebar "Empires of the Ages"). What makes it interesting is that each civilizations has its own version of the larger technology tree, forcing players to alter their strategy based on the

civilization they control. As you proceed down your path to glory, you'll navigate through the stone, tool, bronze and iron ages. You'll go from macemen to elephant archers, and triremes with catapults to priests (potentially the most powerful unit in the game - they can convert opposing troops and buildings to your side).

One major break with other games of its ilk is that there is no artificial "power grid" that must be maintained. You can build structures anywhere on the map; in fact, if you can get a villager (the basic building unit) into your enemies' base, you could build a defense tower and plop down a barracks next to your opponent's.

This feature has added a whole new feeling to base design, opening individual buildings up to easy attacks from the enemy. It also adds the element of "point-to-point" fighting that Shelley was trying to achieve. You can build walls and defense towers to protect structures, but it's unlikely that you'll be able to wall in every structure on the map.

It even has an effect on strategy. Take the collection of resources (which are wood, food, gold and rock); they're either stored in the city center or in special storage pits and granaries. To speed up their collection, place a storage pit right next to the resource being collected (an even better strategy is to put them near multiple resources). Regardless of where they may be on the map, collected resources go into a common pool.

The population of your civilization is controlled by the number of houses you have. However, there is an overall limit to the number of units you can create (50); while it sounds like a low number, the scale of the game is quite a bit different than that of a Command & Conquer. The limitation also forces you to balance the number of villagers and military units (you can destroy units with the mere press of the delete key).

Like other upcoming competitors, Age of Empires uses 3D terrain, meaning height affects movement speed and grants bonuses and penalties in combat. Ranged weapons get bonuses going downhill and are penalized shooting uphill; and watch out for the player who manages to get a defense tower fortified on the top of a mountain.

The game utilizes true fog-of-war and line-of-sight when calculating what units can or cannot see (though unit facing fortunately doesn't come into play). Once you've scouted an area, that part of the map is displayed on both the screen and the map below;

> however, enemy units that move through these areas will only be detected if you have a building or unit present and the enemy moves within their line-of-sight.

On the interface front, Age of Empires utilizes the now standard Warcraft II interface, though an option will be included to reverse the buttons for Command & Conquer players. There are keyboard shortcuts for all building options, and you can group units, assign them to hotkeys and set waypoints for

their movement. The icon bar is always present along the bottom of the screen, but those concerned about screen real-estate. need not worry - you can change resolutions within the game from 640x480 to 800x600 or 1024x768. Each gives you more visible map area.



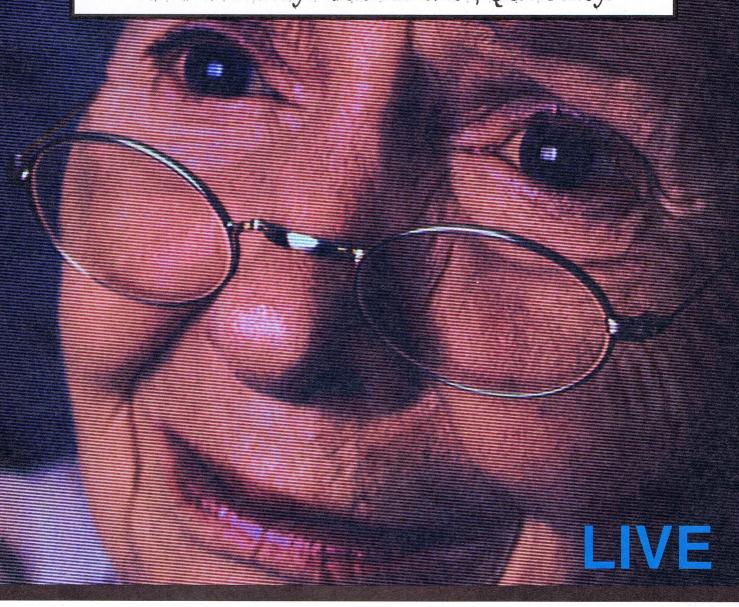
AGE OF AL

If there's one area of design that gamers can agree needs work, it would have to be the woeful state of strategy game artificial intelligence (AI). The deficiencies are even more apparent in the real-time games, as most of these are apparently designed for multiplayer, and then a solo game is tacked on. In most cases, the computer opponent doesn't put up much of a fight, and often resorts to "cheating" in order to gain an advantage.

You've heard it before, and you'll hear it again. "Our Al does not cheat," according to Age of Empires' Al programmer Dave Pottinger. "The only cheating we'd even consider is giving the computer, on the highest skill level, extra resources at the beginning of a scenario."

While editing the AI files will allow you to fine-tune your own scenarios, the ability to generate random scenarios dictated a

"He Was Always Such A Nice, Quiet Boy."



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Find out at www.gopostal.com

Or call 1-888-797-5867 for a fully loaded demo disk (use the code words "lethal injection"). And yeah, there is a charge - but don't go postal - it's only 5 bucks.











A massive battle

You can use the environment to assist your defense

more generalized approach to Al. They are designing the Al to reproduce standard military maneuvers, leaving in some random factor so it's not too predictable. For example, the computer can use wounded soldiers to try to bait your troops to attack them. Meanwhile, it's moved its units in behind your town, and suddenly attacks with its more powerful attack force. When faced with a particular problem, the computer may try multiple approaches in order to solve it. For example, a guard tower at the top of a mountain is a formidable threat. The computer will analyze this situation and try to attack from the front or the sides, weakening it with each attack.

The AI will also learn your style of play as you replay the same scenario over and over again, and will pick up your general tendencies as you play the game. For example, if you tend to favor cavalry units as opposed to legions, the computer will eventually start to favor strategies to counteract that tendency, forcing you to change your tactics from game-to-game.

Overall, all of this time spent with Al will attempt to, as Pottinger put it, "provide the best overall experience for a single-player game." That alone is newsworthy in these days of "multiplayer-first" designs.

AGE OF GRAPHICS

One look at the screenshots should be enough to convince you that this is an incredibly attractive game, arguably the most detailed and best looking of the upcoming real-time strategy games. The animation is both incredibly detailed and fluid, the colors rich and varied, and the overall speed of the graphics engine, even at this point and minus some final tweaking, commendable. Despite a box that will warn you that you'll need a Pentium to run the game, Ensemble's Matt Pritchard (a disciple of ex-id Software guru Michael Abrash) claims it will still get 30

frames per second of scrolling on a 486 DX4/100 because they've rewritten the core graphics routines in assembly language.

The original graphic look was inspired by the benchmark of isometric artwork, *SimCity 2000*, but the art staff at Ensemble, a well-scrubbed bunch that look more like a football team than stereotypical artists, has created a remarkably attractive game (and the fact it runs in 256 colors makes it even more impressive). Villagers throw spears at wild animals, from gazelles to elephants, and convert them to food, all with incredibly detailed animations. Watch them spear the beast, chop it up and carry the meat back to your village. Watch the catapults launch their fiery ordnance, and watch it arc across the battlefield.

Special mention must be made of the various death animations, as horses rear back and throw their riders, elephants get toppled, chariots upended and bodies tossed all over the screen. It's an impressive spectacle – mass slaughter as visual poetry.

AGE OF EMPIRES

The game is already up and running with most of the features in place. The release date is set in stone for October 31st (1997 – we know you were wondering about that). This gives Ensemble plenty of time to tune and balance the program. It's already running quite speedily and without any fatal crash bugs, and – dare we say – it looks nearly releasable in its current state.

After playing the game for more hours than any sane adult would care to admit, it's already clear that Microsoft has a product that combines the best parts of *Civilization* and *Warcraft*. Though it's impossible to give any sort of final evaluation of incomplete software, it can be said that *Age of Empires*, like *Civilization*, *Warcraft II* and *Command & Conquer*, already has that something – whatever it is – that causes minutes to turn into hours and nights to turn into mornings. –*Steve Bauman*



EMPIRES OF THE AGES



The 12 empires that you'll be able to control in Age of Empires, and the benefits they'll bring with them.

ASSYRIA

Missile units have increased rate of fire (ROF), speedier villagers

BABYLON

Stronger walls, towers and priests

CHOSON

Stronger swordsmen, extra range for towers, cheap priests

EGYPT

Priests have greater range

GREECE

Faster phalanx, legion and ship units

HITTITE

Stronger catapults and missile units, greater warship range

MINOA

Cheaper ships, faster longbow and increased farm production

PERSIA

Better hunters, faster elephant units, higher trireme ROF

PHOENICIA

Cheaper elephants, higher catapult trireme ROF

SUMERIA

Stronger villagers, higher catapult ROF, increased farm production

SHANG

Cheaper villagers, stronger walls

YAMATO

Cheaper cavalry training, faster construction, increased foraging, stronger ships



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This is real-time tactical combat — smart, visual, and violent. The animation? Flawless. Feel the heat and toxic gases singe your eyes with each fiery explosion and massive eruption.







TODAY, WE'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU HOW NICELY THEY'VE GROWN UP.



With the plethora of recent action/adventures (heavy accent on the "action"), the birth (and imminent death!?) of interactive movies and the flux of *Myst* wannabees (you know who you are), many folks are speculating that the adventure game as we knew it is all but dead. We say, "not so!" The good news is that grues, two-headed monkeys and the zug-zug contingent are lurking in the wings to restore faith that traditional adventures are not on the endangered species list. At least not yet.

Hello, sailor

The earliest legacy to which we see a tribute is that of the *Zork* Universe. Activision, who has had the *Zork* franchise since its acquisition of Infocom in 1986, is presenting *Zork Grand Inquisitor*, an astonishing twelfth in the string of *Zork* related products which goes back to 1977 (counting *Enchanter*, *Sorcerer*, *Spellbreaker* and *Wishbringer*).

Those who were dismayed by the somber and dark Zork Nemesis will be thrilled to see that Zork Grand Inquisitor designers are really devoted to giving us back the humor of the earlier days of Zork when Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive was ruler of the Great Underground Empire, and the official currency was the zorkmid. Well, you'll be happy to know that the official currency is still the zorkmid, and there will be plenty more that is familiar to those who remember Zork as it used to be.

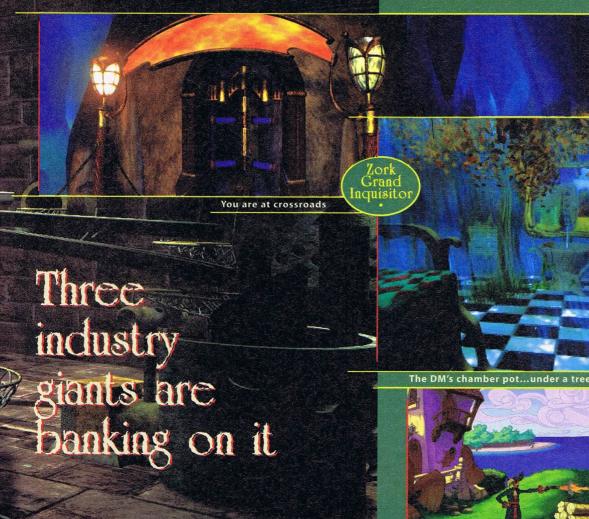
The game combines live-action video, 16-bit graphics and an enhanced 3D 360-degree engine similar to *Zork Nemesis'*, immersing the player in a first-person view of locations such as Port Foozle, GUE Tech, the White House and the ever popular Flood Control Dam. The

Master. As in Spellbreaker and Beyond Zork, we find that magic has gone away. The Grand Inquisitor has deemed it illegal - punishable to the greatest extent of the law. A curfew is in effect, and life in general... bites. The Dungeon Master has been sitting around for centuries as the spiteful rules of the Inquisitor are upheld, and points out a magical flower to the Inquisitor believing that magic, being magic, must return. Unhappy, the Inquisitor bludgeons the DM to death forthwith. Almost. The essence of the DM escapes his body and ends up in Port Foozle circa 1067 GUE. Enter The Adventurer, who will time-travel back to three periods of Zork history to recover three magical treasures that will ultimately restore magic to the land. Zork players will remember them as The Skull of Yoruk (I knew him, Horatio...), The Cube of Foundation (for cement pourers everywhere) and the Coconut of Quendor (and its secret piña colada recipe). Time travel will take place from the perspective of the Brogmoid, The Griff and Lucy Flathead (of the Beverly Hills Flatheads).

New to the Zork Universe is an environment map enabling instantaneous teleportation between locations (*de rigueur* these days). But most engaging is the fact that they are playing up the humor we have come to associate with Zork. We may or may not see a grue, but we *will* see a Brogmoid, Charon, the oarsman of the Hades Shuttle Service, Marvin the Magical Goatfish and the EGRAM spell to make purple things invisible (finally, a Barney-detonator).

Hey look! It's a two headed monkey!

Next in line in the legacy trail, albeit much less connected to the birth of the genre, is the long-awaited sequel to the highly acclaimed *Monkey Island* series. In 1990, the world was introduced



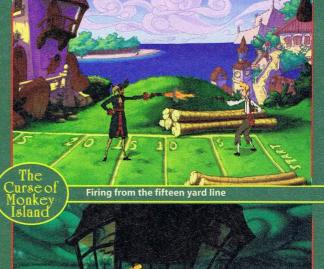
to that quirky I-wanna-be-a-pirate kinda guy with a name to be reckoned with – Guybrush Threepwood. *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* will soon have a big sister – *The Curse of Monkey Island*.

No hardware stresser here, the game will be a third person cartoon, done in high-resolution 2D 640X480 256 colors. Technology is not the point, say designers, story is.

Guybrush is back sporting a longer, manlier persona on the outside... and visions of Elaine Marley resting soulfully on the inside. But of course, the evil pirate LeChuck hasn't given up on making the lovely Ms. Marley his bride. He tried as a ghost in *Secret*, as a zombie in *Revenge* and this time he appears as a demon, complete with flaming beard and sinister parrot. You'd think after years of therapy that he would know better that relationships are not built on this kind of sensationalism, but nooooo...

Guybrush, in order to secure Elaine for himself, slips what he doesn't realize is a cursed ring onto her finger. She is Midasized (but could use some work on her catalytic converter) as gold as puce is purple. Guybrush must uncurse Elaine, thwart LeChuck and otherwise defend himself against villains and other pirates (Har!). Expect a few arcade sequences here (a usually dubious attempt at variety in gameplay), as you will need to demonstrate agility with a cannon and blow up a few pirate ships.

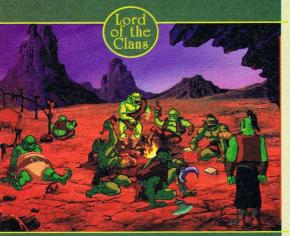
Many have been bothered by the end of the previous game in which it is revealed that the evil LeChuck is actually Guybrush's annoying little brother Chuckie. And it was all a dream... This ending more or less shot down sequel possibilities based on these characters (little brother, indeed). Co-project leaders and designers Jonathan Ackerman and Larry Ahern admit that weaseling out of this one was... er, rather, ingeniously creating plot elements to explain the little-brother-phenomenon was one of the greatest challenges of the design. Those



Fog at 500 feet



Har! All hands on deck



Thrall meets the Shattered Hand Clan



Deathwing kicks back with hookah



Thrall, as a dwarf, is a babe magnet



Gazlowe is no mechanic

who didn't play *Monkey Island 2* will not be burdened by the explanations, and those who did will have all of their questions answered.

The game will feature a chapter structure similar to that of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, and will reintroduce many of your favorite characters, including bespectacled Wally. Will we see Stan? They won't commit. Guybrush will be played by Dominic Armato, who, according to all sources, *is* Guybrush Threepwood. The voice of young pain-in-the-butt Kenny Falmouth will be played by Gary Coleman – accident? Or fate?

"There will be more monkeys in *The Curse of Monkey Island* than in *Monkeys 1* and 2 combined," says Ackley. Ahern agrees and assures us that no monkeys were forced to wear makeup during the production of this game. The two designers really enjoy working together, and described the intricately creative design process as, "the four of us [including lead animator Marc Overney and lead artist Bill Tiller] are just a buncha programmers and artists sittin' around cracking each other up." When asked what the world should know about Ahern, Ackley said, "Larry doesn't snore." The reciprocal question to Ahern yielded, "He is the slowest eater I have ever met in my *entire life.*" Ackley concurred. These are very funny men whose humor should serve them well in the *Monkey Island* universe. And they have a lot to live up to. The former games have been lauded as some of the funniest and clever games in the history of the genre. When asked about the legacy of Ron Gilbert, Ackley stated, "Ron is one of the greatest talents of our industry, and we certainly wouldn't be making a *Monkey Island* game without Ron and the style he has cemented for us."

Can Monkey Island survive without Ron Gilbert? We'll see, and as Guybrush might have said after winning his fourth world spitting championship, "OK, fellas, show us what you can do... it's time to spit or get off the pot."

Adventure comes to Azeroth

When overnight (?!) success company Blizzard Entertainment decides to invest in the creation of a 2D point 'n' click, it is further evidence that the genre is not only alive and well, but moving forward to reach an audience that was perhaps *not* weaned on the *Zorks*.

Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans is Blizzard's first step into the realm of traditional adventure games. They too have heard rumors of the dying genre and refuse to believe it. The Warcraft universe, center of Blizzard's strategy blockbusters, is richly steeped in history and legend – so much so that the conveyance of story and characters in the intermission segues of Warcraft, Warcraft II and Beyond the Dark Portal sometimes got lost in the fervor to fast-forward to the next "zug-zug." Said designer Wild Bill Roper, "We wanted to take the Warcraft universe and showcase it; there's all kinds of stuff that we know about that is hard to get across in a strategy title. The epic scope and scale that we enjoy is not always evident."

The story begins two years after the Dark Portal is destroyed. Orcs are trapped in Azeroth, and humans in Draenor. Azeroth was in shambles after it had been at war for six or seven years, and the land has become barren and dry. All remaining orcs have been forced into camps or reservations. They're allowed to *live*, basically, but that's about it. Their petitions to open BINGO halls were immediately denied. They were forced either live peacefully with the humans or be chastised – a broken, beaten, degenerated species – a mere shadow of their formerly proud race.

At the scene of the final battle at the Portal, a small orclet was found and confiscated by Lt. Blackmoore. This is our hero, Thrall, who was raised by Blackmoore completely isolated from other orcs. He has not a clue as to his orcish nature, or of anything even remotely orcian. Throughout the game he researches his heritage and tackles the problem of why the Clan has become so passive (testosterone depreciation?), and at one point goes dwarven. Over 70 characters are presented in high-resolution 2D, and we'll see a lot of familiar faces such as Kargath Bladefist, leader of the Shattered Hand Clan and cousin of Edward Scissorhands and Captain Hook; Deathwing, just kickin' back in his lair; and Zul'jin, who now runs a curio shop.

A lot of characters were developed by adopting a tongue-in-cheek projection of what a particular character might be doing when the nations are not at war. Curio shop? Sure, why not? Thrall will be played by Clancy Brown (Superman's Lex Luther, Highlander, The Shawshank Redemption), Doomhammer by Peter Cullen (Optimus Prime from TV's Transformers), and Disney's Hunchback of Notre Dame, Tony Jay, will play Drek'thar. Will strategy players buy a traditional adventure? Blizzard thinks so.

He who laughs last

The important thread that unites these three products is the humor that lies at their core. When a player does stupid things in order to solve an adventure – and admit it, we do ("Tickle the chandelier," "cheese the door"), a humorous setting is generally more appropriate as we are thus invited to laugh at ourselves. Oh, sure, comedy is not easy to do. Perhaps that's why we haven't seen quite as much of late (exceptions: Callahan's Crosstime Saloon and The Space Bar, for two). Three industry giants are offering us laughter in the footprints of classics. They believe there is life and afterlife in the traditional adventure genre. Let's believe them.

THE MEEK

SHALL INHERIT

THE EARTH.





WARBREDS



Spectacular animation. Leaders of the fallen Yedda Empire describe the events leading to their downfall.



Customize your units. Acquire genetic knowledge from conquered enemies to create new, better-equipped fighting units.



View more terrain. Place units in formation and monitor strategic movement with the unique zoom mode.

Centuries ago, in another world, a great civilization crumbles. And in the ensuing void, four former slave clans are set free to battle for rule of the planet. Now you command one of the alien clans and create your own customized units in a brutal struggle for power. In this real-time strategy game, the strong survive. The meek die.

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While one can argue about whether war is ever really chivalric, there's little question that we often hold some elements of war as such, combining excitement and/or romance, especially from wars that have generally faded from the memory of the living. Even though

few of the combatants still live, World War I, with its trenches, barbed wire, and machine guns, is generally not thought of when one says chivalry... until you mention air combat. It was during WW I that air combat saw its beginnings, beginnings marked by flimsy aircraft, little instrumentation, and no aerial tactics. Forgotten on the ground, a code of conduct marked much of air combat, revolving not so much around kill ratios and combat results as around stature and honor (or at least, that's what people seem to think). Aces might call out other opponents for aerial duels that had little to do with the combat on the ground, and both sides might mourn the loss of an honorable participant, no matter his affiliation.

In the world of computer gaming, WW I flight sims seem to come in waves; none are released for several years, then we'll get a couple (or several) in close order. The last big wave of such games saw the release of *Red Baron*, a game generally regarded as the best of the era (and arguably the best of any era), and one still played regularly today. Still, it's been a number of years, and as with planes in WW I, the technology of computer gaming has advanced significantly and *Red Baron* is showing its age. The cry is out for a new Ace, and Sierra is attempting to respond with a complete rework of its old classic called, cunningly enough, *Red Baron II*.

The setting

The game is set over the portion of the Western Front that crossed through Northern France, and it covers the entire air war. You may pilot one of 26 plane types for either France, Britain, the United States, or Germany, and will encounter approximately 40 plane types altogether. A quick-start mode will be the most arcade-ish, dropping you, all by your lonesome into a virtual airspace loaded with enemy. Historical or generated single missions will let you command or participate in specific actions, whereas the campaign mode lets you dive into the meat of the game as you build your career throughout the war.

The world as currently modeled has over 40,000 square miles of digitized terrain, complete with accurate locations for the cities, villages, aerodromes, bases, and other features you would expect to encounter at this period in history. (This amount of ground detail, coupled with the beautiful planes, has caused one important casualty – 3D acceleration. It will not be supported, as the current batch of cards cannot handle the number of textures in the game environment.) This world will not be a static historical snapshot, either, but will change and show quite a bit of activity. As you fly the mission generator will be constantly tracking and updating activity in a 50

mile bubble around your plane, even modeling activity out of your line-of-sight. For example, on the way to a balloon-busting target you may see a dogfight occurring in the distance, cross over a battle on the ground, or even hear the wail of an air-raid siren as you skim

over an enemy aerodrome (perhaps generating an unwanted response in the process). Civilian targets will theoretically be off-limits, but should you strafe a town you might hear a church bell pealing out cry of outrage. All this activity may well have nothing to do with your mission and, in fact, involvement in it may cause you to fail at



your assigned goals, so you'll need to stay sharp and stick to your objective... at least until honor demands that you respond. For those moments when the urge to blast your friends to smithereens rises above your need for historical immersion, the game will offer complete multiplayer dogfighting for all of your dogfighting needs.

"Getting it right" is obviously important to the team at Dynamix; says producer Neil Haldar, "The team that's been assembled and has been working on the product is very passionate about having detailed authenticity so you have the right squadrons in the right places at the right times flying the right kinds of planes with the right markings." (He does caveat this by saying "We've made a couple of [historical] tweaks to enhance gameplay; maybe this squadron moves off a little bit ahead of when it actually did, but for the most part it's historically accurate.") For example, the plane markings are more than just digital decals – they show the specific unit affiliations of a particular plane; the wise pilot will learn these and track the quality of friendly and enemy squadrons so he or she knows what to expect when the furball's joined.

The campaign game

While single missions will be fun once in a while, hard-core sim pilots will want to dig into the meaty campaign games. You'll start a lowly wingman, just a small cog in the machine of a larger mission. At this level you won't have to worry about navigation, mission planning, or any of the bigger picture; instead your goal is to protect your wingman, accomplish the mission objective, and stay alive. You may be tempted to peel off to investigate something you see happening or



Left top to bottom: Keep track of enemy Aces; eventually you may wish to challenge them to a oneon-one duel

Taking out a Dr. I; note that this is not the authentic cockpit for a Sopwith Pup!

Right top to bottom: Civilian locations were supposed to be off limits; obviously they weren't always

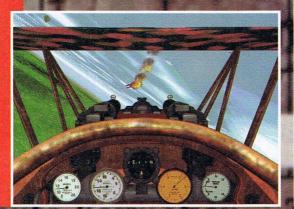
Bailing out between the cloud layers; early in the war pilots often didn't wear parachutes, so they would have to choose between burning or falling to their deaths

A British F.E. 2 from early in the war, it was driven by a pusher propeller

An example of a simpler cockpit







to join an "exciting" looking fight, but this isn't the way to rise in the ranks – teamwork is. As you successfully complete missions you'll get newer, better aircraft, perhaps move to a more elite squadron, and maybe get promoted. At higher ranks you'll need to learn navigation as it will be you leading the missions; eventually you'll be planning them as well as executing them, and the entire squadron will be your responsibility.

Red Baron II would be less of a sim if it didn't include the personalities that gave WW I combat its aura of romanticism. As you grow in stature you'll track the status of enemy aces; if one is outpacing you in what Sierra terms the Ace Race, honor demands that you challenge him to a one-on-one duel. As you rack up your own kills, though, be prepared to face similar challenges from a mounting number of enemies – turn them down and you risk your standing and your honor. Like the aces of old, you'll be able to paint your plane in a scheme that will identify you to friends and enemies alike.

The simulation

Of course, the missions and campaign are just a wrapper for the heart of the game - the actual simulation. There is almost nothing left of the original game inside Red Baron II (except the gameplay, we hope). The flight model, done bysimulation veteran Gary Stottlemyer, is now physicsbased; the forces that act on your plane are modeled on the fly (so to speak), so that, for example, damage to a wing will realistically stress your plane as air flows over and around the damaged portion. The Dynamix team has put quite a bit of time into researching not only the general designs of the planes but the materials that went into their construction, and this research has been incorporated into the modeling. Ironically, even though the modeling is more advanced, the planes, in some instances, are actually easier to fly. Stottlemyer explains that the games a few years back often used a lot of contrivances in their models, contrivances that sometimes introduced strange, unrealistic, and unpredictable flight results in some of the aircraft, making flying them more difficult. With the new modeling, many of the planes will, once they're airborne and into level flight, basically fly themselves. Easier, though, doesn't mean unrealistic; send one of these fragile birds into a power dive and you'll likely shear its wings in short order.

As with *Red Baron*, the cockpits are being modeled with varying levels of instrumentation authenticity. The Easy cockpits will be loaded with all the instruments a modern pilot would expect to find, including many not found in WW I-era craft. The Balanced cockpit reduces the instrument count somewhat, and the Authentic cockpit gives you what that plane actually had – often not much more than a compass and a tachometer. In the higher difficulty levels you will need to learn to navigate, using compass bearings, a timer, a map, landmarks, and your best speed guesstimate to guide you to your objective – true seat of the pants flying. *Red Baron II* also features a new cockpit mode that lets you slew your view about in 3D, something that should help situational awareness tremendously.

Take to the skies!

World War I planes were simple beasts; a joystick, throttle, rudder control and a trigger button are all that you should need to fly one in *Red Baron II* (indeed, the Microsoft Sidewinder Pro should be ideal). Because of this simplicity the game will be well suited for those just getting in to the flight simulation genre, but the advanced features will, Sierra hopes, please the most critical sim *grognard*. We'll all get our chance to find out if they've succeeded later this year. –*Scott Udell*

Elements: New [Centauri Galaxy]

Fear

Global Maps

Combat

SE Soismic Ev

Morale

.189

Volcano

Confrontation



Element of Surprise



Element of Danger





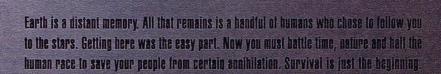






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SIERRA*



here is that each of these units will have a tactical role on the battlefield. Sure, the scout isn't meant to go head-to-head with the support Gear, but he might be 800 meters in front of friendly support Gears and he's allowing them to call in strikes. We're trying to aim for an integrated environment where every Gear, every vehicle has its purpose in the battlefield and without any one of these guys, you're somewhat hampered."

Gear Commander?

Heavy Gear's producer, Tim Morton, is a veteran of MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries and the lush 3Dfx conversion of MechWarrior 2. He has a soft-spoken, good-natured quality, kind of like Dana Carvey's George Bush. But his long blond hair and goofy charm are more reminiscent of Dana Carvey's Garth. When asked about the narrative structure of Heavy Gear, Morton speaks admiringly of Activision's Interstate 76: "Those guys did a fantastic job of marrying combat to story." His description of Heavy Gear's storytelling sounds familiar. "You'll have cutscenes interspersed. Although they're not very long, they definitely draw you into the environment much more deeply, because you are a character in the story. The characters you're seeing in the cutscenes you're hearing on the battlefield. And the effects of what you're doing on the battlefield really translate over into the story."

But 1-76 suffered from being a strictly either/or experience: you could take the linear road or the random road. Heavy Gear will make the random road a bit more interesting. "On the one hand we have the story experience which is linear. There's also the experience [i.e., the random mission generator] that's not in any way predetermined. That experience, though it doesn't have character-based cutscenes, does have heavy emphasis on your pilot as a character. Your pilot will gain rank and access to new technologies. We've done a lot of work on a random mission generator and that will feature unlimited missions so you can continue playing through the non-linear experience for as long as you want to build your character." As with Diablo, characters developed this way can be used in multiplayer games, complete with the unique characteristics a player's n-net box picks up.

Browder chimes in with a description of how a series of random missions might progress. "You can do a search and destroy mission, which allows you to find the enemy. Then you can do a battle mission which allows you to fight them and if you defeat them then you can do a pursuit mission as you blow into their rear areas. As you destroy structures, as your structures are destroyed or captured by the enemy, it affects variables: the supplies that you have, which affect the kind of gears that you have." Could gamers starved for a truly dynamic campaign engine have their prayers answered at last?

Gear shift

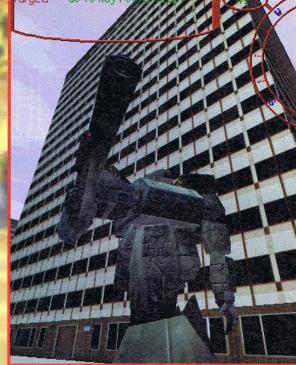
Heavy Gear will also introduce a whole slew of new features for players accustomed to the MechWarrior engine. Many Gears are equipped with indirect fire weapons, such as grenades and mortars. The terrain system has been completely

redone to allowing for rolling hills, which makes lines of sight and indirect fire more significant. There's a faster movement mode akin to skating, where a Gear's legs lock up and it moves on treads, gaining speed at a cost to maneuverability. The wireframe models displaying damage to enemy units are now directly overlaid on the actual unit, offering immediate feedback on where and how well you're hitting your target. The modeling of armor is more sophisticated, requiring penetration checks for weapons; smaller weapons can fire till the cows come home with no hope of damaging wellarmored targets. As with the MechWarrior games, Gears are all customizable between missions, depending on a player's combat priority rating, which gets higher as a player racks up kills. Combat priority can also be used to match players of similar skill levels in multiplayer matches.

Of course, Heavy Gear will support multiplayer gaming, having benefited from the painful lessons learned from the MechWarrior titles."We went through a lot of blood and sweat to debug Netmech" says Morton of MechWarrior's network multiplayer shell. "From there we took it to Mercenaries, which was better. We introduced Internet play, but it was hard to use. With 1-76, we've gone another step and it's very well integrated now in the Windows 95 environment. For Heavy Gear, with literally a couple of clicks you'll be on the Internet." Morton says they're working to accommodate the frequent customer requests for features like dynamic joining and co-operative missions.

Heavy Gear is being built from the ground up to support new technologies. "On the graphics side we just finished a floating point conversion that lets us take advantage of Pentium-specific optimizations," says Morton. "We have Direct3D support built into the engine. We're doing support for 3D sound. We have a programming team that rivals in size the programming team we had for MW2." Despite their resources, the development team has had to let some ideas go by the wayside. For instance, although Gears will be able to knock each other over, bona fide hand-to-hand combat proved impractical. Browder almost wistfully points out a painted lead miniature with a vibroblade that probably won't find its way into the finished product.

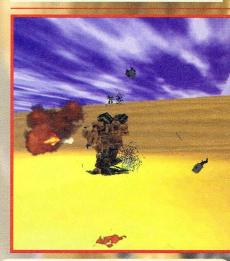
The stunning look of the game thus far was only matched by the enthusiasm of Heavy Gear's producer, director, and assistant game designer. If these guys were a band ("Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Heavy Gear!"), Chacko Sonny would be the brooding lead singer, Dustin Browder would be the cheery drummer, and Tim Morton would be the laid-back bassist. This fall, we'll get to see what kind of music they would make when Heavy Gear stomps onto the shelves.



Direct 3D support will allow for considerable detail in the texture mapping, as is evident in the buildings

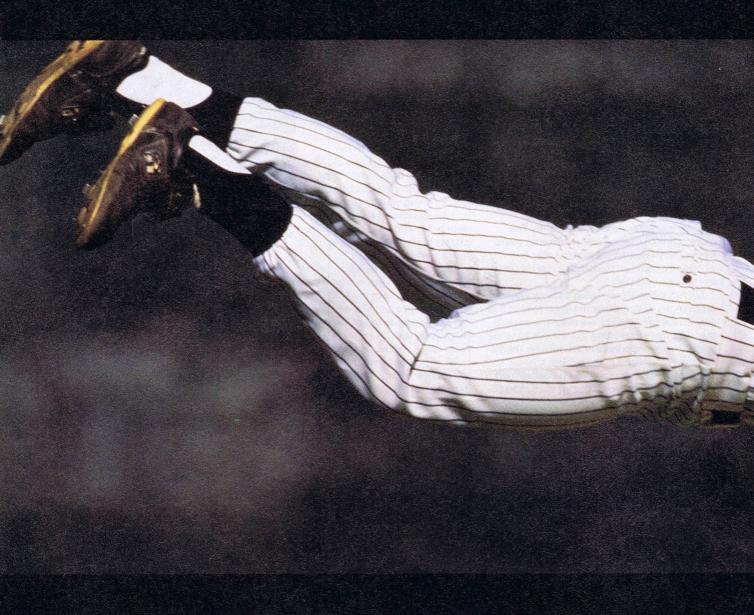


The "pack" on the Gear's back is its engine; hits from behind are more likely to damage or destroy a Gear's ability to move. You can see the treads on the Gear's feet are used for its faster secondary travel mode



Although no longer attached to its owner, you can see a bona fide gear hand on the right. There's one gear that won't be doing much clapping any time soon

ALL THE STRATEGY.



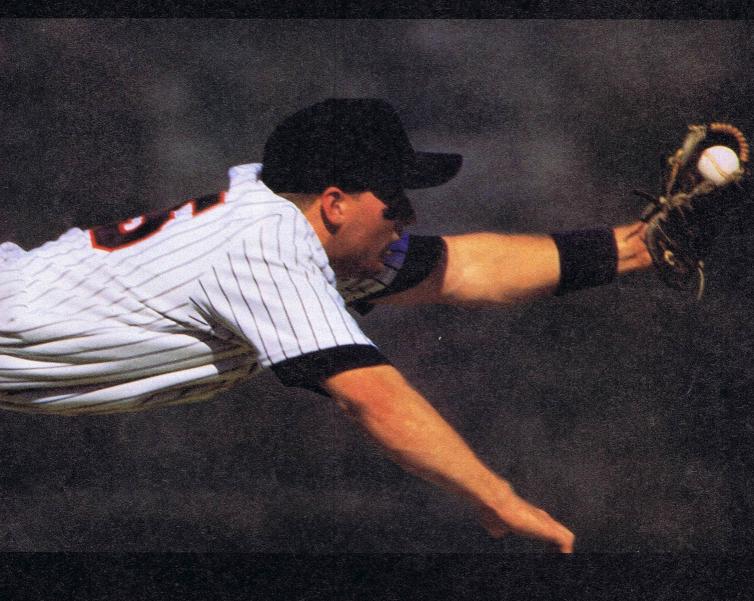
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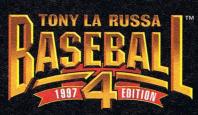






DOUBLE THE HUSTLE.













Reaching for the Reich

By Scott Udel

t's early September, 1944; D-Day was just over three months ago, and the incredible Allied drive across France that happened

after the Normandy breakout has petered out. The British commander Field Marshal Montgomery, famed for his exploits in North Africa, suggests a daring plan to end the war by Christmas: using air-dropped forces, seize a series of bridges deep in enemy territory, then mount a massive ground assault to connect the dots. The final bridge crosses the Rhine; reach it and the Allied spearhead is aimed straight for the heart of Germany. One of his subordinates suggests that he fears the operation is going "a bridge too far"; as, historically, it did. Microsoft and Atomic Games aim to give gamers a chance to change history in A Bridge Too Far, the first sequel to last year's Close Combat.

THE CAMPAIGN

In Close Combat, you worked your way through a fairly linear series of missions, following the exploits of a single roughly company-sized unit across several weeks. Operation Market-Garden, however, was a much shorter battle, with dramatic operations occurring simultaneously along a long corridor. Using the old system would mean leaving out much of the rest of the battle and focusing in on one particular area. Atomic Games, however, wanted to cover it all (or at least most of it), so out went the old campaign system and in came a greatly expanded one that lets you experience most of the major actions and adds a lot more strategic depth to the system.

While you fight the tactical battles much as you did in Close Combat, in A Bridge Too Far you have control over the entire battle at the operational level. The strategic map is broken down into three sectors: Arnhem, Nijmegen, and Eindhoven, and within each sector you'll face smaller "operations"



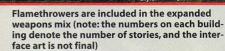
Three sectors each contain a number of different operations areas; these are further subdivided into specific maps (about 30 at the latest count)



The zoomed-in view is much cleaner than that of Close Combat



Fighting through a portion of Nijmegan; notice the smoothness of the terrain features, something impossible under the old tile-based system



which occur across a number of maps. Instead of playing all the battles in one sector straight through, you'll play the operations that would have occurred at roughly the same time. Between tactical battles in a sector it'll be up to you to make decisions about where to put Requisition Points. The number of Requisition Points available to any one operation depends, in turn, on the amount of supply you've allocated to that sector. This was an airborne operation, and the Allied airlift wasn't up to the task of lavishly supplying everyone only one sector can get air supply at a time, so you'll have some tough decisions to make.

Avoiding one-sided play is something important to the game; no longer will playing the Germans present you with defensive situations only, and playing the Allies doesn't guarantee that you're always on the offensive. Says Keith Zabalaoui, president of Atomic Games, "That's something else that's really attractive about this battle – no one side is always attacking or always defending, no one side is always outnumbered by the other side. It's give and take all throughout this area."

Victory in A Bridge Too Far will be based on the historical operation; if you do better than the Allies (or Germans) did, you'll win, worse and you lose, and a historical outcome means the game ends in a draw. Atomic will be very surprised if anyone can actually meet the Allies' full objectives; likewise, it's extremely unlikely that German players can keep the Allies from accomplishing at least some of their goals.

THE COMBAT

While the operational-level campaign system has had the most drastic changes, gamers will notice quite a bit different at the tactical level as well. Some of the biggest changes

are in the modeling of the terrain. Maps are now hand-crafted (they're no longer tile-based), and are based on aerial photographs taken before the battle, paper maps, and visits to the actual battlefield. They are in 16-bit color and come in 4 MB chunks; helping to improve the scrolling speed. Map detail at the zoomed-in level has been vastly improved, and the units too are nolonger pixelated blobs.

Each map takes approximately three manweeks to do (one of the reasons there is no map editor), and includes a lot of information underlying the visuals. One of the biggest "data changes" is the addition (finally!) of height for both terrain and buildings. While Close Combat was actually modeled in 3D space, all of the underlying terrain was flat and buildings singlestoried. The buildings were the tougher problem due to interface issues; the solution - one provided by gamer feedback - was to abstract the placement of units in buildings; according to Atomic's John Anderson, "What we do is treat any solider in a multistory building as if he could exist at any one of those particular levels." As before, buildings do add defensive benefits, but they can also be brought down by heavy gun and mortar fire, killing any troops inside.

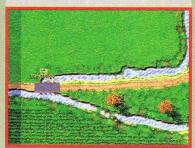
In an effort to keep the interface simple, only one new command, Sneak, has been added. It lets you order a team to do just that – crawl up on a position and, once they reach it, not immediately engage everything in sight, making it much easier to set up ambushes. Areas of suppression fire are now highlighted, and the sprites representing individual troops (which were already larger-than-life) have been expanded again and will be colored accurately based on nationality, troop type, command level, etc.

Zabalaoui says that A Bridge Too Far has "way more variety" in terms of troop and weapon types than Close Combat did; currently the game has some 130 infantry and vehicle types from the four different armies that were the major combatants in Market-Garden. SS units will be included in the game; while hard on the marketers, perhaps, they played a critical role in defeating the Allied operation, and leaving them out would destroy the historicity of the simulation... and history is a big part of Atomic designs. Zabalaoui says "I try to make [my games] as realistic as I can because this is probably going to be the biggest doses of history a lot of people are going to get." On leaving out controversial units like the SS forces he says "We don't want to be revisionists; if you erase the evil you'll have a hard time recognizing it the next time it comes around."

While largely hidden from the player, there are a huge number of elements (at last count, 142) being tracked behind the scenes, including the height of objects in ½ meter increments, coverage provided for troops in different positions, protection ratings, movement rates, flammability, amounts of debris left over once an item is destroyed, etc. Data tweakers and *grognards* take note; while not documented, much of the data *is* in fairly self-explanatory text files, so if you think they got the average burst



Buildings will cast a line-of-sight "shadow," something you can use to your tactical advantage



The open terrain around the Oosterbeek landing zone – a killing zone for any soldiers caught out in it



The Americans hold the Zon bridge, but for how long? Also, it appears as if the Germans have been at least partially successful in destroying the bridge



Setting the supply priorities between the sectors



Sherman 76s support an assault; their main gun fire might be enough to turn a building into rubble – a good way to take out German defenders

amount on a .50 cal. wrong, you can change it (although doing so may invalidate your setup for multiplayer games).

Many other little design tweaks should improve the game as well. Units can be retreated off-map during combat, saving them for a future operation. You can now issue orders to units at deployment time before the action begins, something both more realistic and easier on the gamer. Atomic had lots of complaints over the mission ending conditions, which were based on solely on the morale of the units in each firefight. For A Bridge Too Far, the gamer gets more input, and can choose to either flee immediately or start an unofficial cease-fire by breaking off the immediate fire-fight.

THE EXTRAS

The best opponent is always another human being, and A Bridge Too Far will continue to let you match wits with the best in two player head-to-head across modem, LAN, and the Internet. Close Combat used a multiplayer model based on order-passing alone; while this kept message traffic to a minimum, there ended up being quite a few problems maintaining synchronization between the two machines. A Bridge Too Far will fix this by going to a client-server model where actual event data is flowing between the two machines, something which should improve reliability but may hurt gaming on lower-speed connections.

An editor feature was one of the most requested additions for the Close Combat engine, and the Battlemaker is Atomic's answer. There will be no map editor (according Zabalaoui, "it is impossible for us to give [gamers] a map editor because of what we're doing with the maps" – see the map explanation, above), but the Battlemaker lets you play with just about everything else. Pick a map, set your deployment zones, specify victory locations and types, and decide whether you want to buy units, leave your purchasing power as in-game requisition points, or mix the two.

JUST ENOUGH BRIDGE?

Close Combat caused waves in wargaming circles; its real-time aspect broke away from the prevalent wargame style, and its former association with the board wargame Squad Leader under a previous publisher caused some confusion and not a little rancor with some gamers; also, there were some design aspects that some grognards (being true to their natures) grumbled about. While Microsoft, Atomic, and many gamers were happy enough with the results (and, apparently, the sales), all recognized that there were improvements to be made and new approaches to be tried; A Bridge Too Far is the result. If you just plain didn't like the overall approach Close Combat took, this sequel probably won't change your mind; the rest of us, though, can hope that the improvements to the system will lift A Bridge Too Far to the level of a classic. We'll all get the chance to see if Atomic and Microsoft have succeeded this Fall.

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t's been over a year now since we started hearing about Starcraft (first at E3 in May and then again when Blizzard demonstrated the game at the CGS+ offices last Fall), and most folks know that since then Blizzard has scrapped much of the original, Warcrafty-looking design for an improved, grittier style. What's been less obvious is

the time they've spent working on crafting all the little details that have been such an important part of most Blizzard products. They recently stopped by our office for a second time to give us an update and, at this point, things certainly look promising.

The game features three different forces - Terrans, Zergs, and Protoss - waging their own little galactic war. Unlike Warcraft II, the storylines that will come out as you play the different campaigns will combine to tell a larger, united story. Also changed, and something of a risk, but one that we like, is the composition of the sides involved; each race is quite different from the others. While this makes play-balancing more difficult, it gives gamers a new experience with each campaign. In addition to the three races, there will

be neutral vessels and characters. "Neutral" doesn't necessarily mean passive or undefended; you could face a flight of pirate fighters or other aggressive dangers.

Starcraft features three different terrain sets: space with fragments of alien platforms, planetary areas, and indoor installation missions. In space, flying craft pretty much have the run of the map; Blizzard didn't want to introduce unrealistic asteroid walls or other similar solid

barriers, but have instead implemented natural phenomena that may not stop movement completely but will instead have different effects on different units. Generally, though, missions in space will be pretty frenetic affairs..

Ground missions, however, will be much closer to the style of play of other real-time strategy games. A modified set of units will be available, and different terrain sets, including water with depths, mean new tactics will come to the fore. Installation missions will not just be ground battles indoors; instead, they'll be almost mini-RPGs with unique character units like the Legendary Heroes of Warcraft II. These missions will have some continuity as well; for example, if a hero unit picks up an item in one mission, that hero will have the item in another.

The map/scenario editor will be an even bigger part of Starcraft than it was of Warcraft II. First off, it will be built right into the main ◀ Remnants of long-gone alien structures provide "terrain" in space

game - no need to start a separate program. The new editor will also let you add more flavor to your own creations, supplying text or even voiceovers, and will let you build mini-campaigns out of linked scenarios.

Multiplayer will obviously be a huge part of Starcraft, and Blizzard is spending quite a bit of time on it, both in the game development and in modifications to battle.net. In the game players will have a "registry" of information which will record things like awards, battles won and lost, etc. If you host a game using a custom map and any of the other players don't have the map, the game will automatically send it to them-no need to swap files separately. On battle.net they'll be adding a User ID function which should help players create identifiable personas and help people avoid cheaters. A ranking system will be built-in, as checks to keep players from repeatedly beating a low-skill or "dummy" opponent to artificially

Space battles are extremely hectic affairs Planet-based battles give terrain which will require new tactics; some units will be able to go under water, and there may even be a burrowing unit or two that will be nearly

undetectable 🔻



inflate their rank. A handicapping system lets experts and novices play and helps even out play balance problems like Red Alert's tank rush.

Clans have become an informal part of Diablo, and it's something that will be officially provided for Starcraft in the form of organized Squadrons. Multiplayer games can be played either as allies or teams. "Allies" is the Warcraft II approach, but as teams,

however, things are much different – units and resources are pooled and all players on a team can command or use them. Players can now take over different aspects of the battle; one might be in charge of flying craft, one of ground vehicles, another of buildings, etc.

If the current schedule holds, Blizzard hopes to have Starcraft in the stores by early Fall, and they are aiming for a simultaneous Windows 95 and Macintosh release. Unlike their chief competition for the real-time crown, Westwood Studios and the Command & Conquer series, Blizzard didn't choose to release an interim game (e.g., Red Alert) and has instead put their money on a delayed Starcraft. Visually and story-wise, this certainly isn't a rehash (no "Orcs in Space"), but only some time at the helm of the finished game will tell us if Starcraft meets the high standards set by Warcraft II and Diablo. -Scott Udell

Starcraft · Blizzard Entertainment · Windows 95, MacOS

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Unlimited on the public, it created a minor sensation in the gaming world.

The simulator was a technological marvel with its fluid

dynamic flight model and spectacular terrain. But in the

end there wasn't all that much to do. The focus was on aerobatics -

an acquired taste for many of us - and the flight area was fairly small. Eventually the game faded from the memory of all but the most dedicated flight-sim grognard.

Enter Flight Unlimited II, Looking

Glass's next iteration of the series. The flight area has been vastly expanded to 11,000 square miles of the San Francisco Bay region modeled down to four meters/pixel. Project Director Constantine Hantzopoulos estimates it

would take two and a half hours to fly straight across the included

flight area. While the fluid dynamic flight model has been tweaked and enhanced so aerobatic junkies can still do their thing, the rest of us can spend lots of time touring around, exploring the nooks and crannies of San Francisco. Fly under the Golden Gate, buzz Alcatraz, then head up into the mountains for some sight-seeing. The realistic terrain allows VFR flying, which means the pilot follows roads and uses landmarks to navigate. If you're flying at night, the program allows for celestial navigation. It checks your system clock and places stars and the moon appropriately.

Hantzopoulos stresses that the team is striving for "immersive reality" in a living, breathing world. Up to 600 other aircraft (II5 different kinds, all told) can be in the air at the same time, and while the vast majority will not be in visual range, you'll be able to hear their chatter on the radio. Contact a radio tower, and you'll get real instructions. The computer AI uses a series of radio chatter "chunks" that it strings together into coherent sentences (the highly structured style of air traffic radio operators helps here). If the radio operator tells you there's a commercial jet to your left, look out the window, because it is surely there. If he tells you to tune to the weather

frequency, there's going to be a good reason for you to do so.

Speaking of weather, Flight Unlimited II models day and night, cloudy and clear skies, wind and rain. The rain has to be seen to be believed. Sure, it's eye candy, but seeing the droplets hit the windscreen and then streak up over the canopy is still pretty impressive. Wind is fully modeled. Set it to strong and take a Cessna over a mountain range. The up and down drafts will buffet your plane like a dead leaf at the tail end of autumn.

Another innovation is the seaplane, which you can land on any body of water. Botch the landing, and the thing will sink. Taxiing on water is something you've never seen in any sim before now. As you're coming up to speed for take-off, the plane will start to bob around on the waves. External views show water splashing around.

- Rain spattering on your windows note the streaking effect
- This flight planner/sectional map will aid you in your Bay Area tours

Looking Glass is clearly aiming straight for the Microsoft Flight Simulator crowd with Flight Unlimited II. You get 11,000 square miles out of the box. After that, Looking Glass will



periodically release add-on packs featuring more terrain, planes, or features. Already planned is a network/Internet add-on, since the initial package will only support single player mode. Hantzopoulos is also hoping to encourage the production of add-on packs by thirdparty developers.

Flight Unlimited II is still in the development stage, but already it looks like it might hit the target Looking Glass is reaching for: to become the ultimate civilian flight simulator. After spending a few hours with the team, seeing them feeding off of each other's enthusiasm, it was easy to see that these gaming wizards are once again brewing up something special. And after Flight Unlimited II is out the door? Well, the wallpaper on Hantzopoulos's Windows screen is a mock-up title screen of Flight Combat... but that's another story. - Peter Smith

Flight Unlimited II · Looking Glass · Windows 95

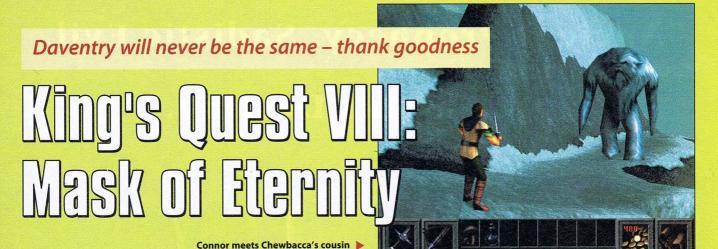


From the creators of Ripper...

An Occult Mystery



www.bdahlia.com



oot it up and beam and chuckle at the dancing mops and brooms! Thrill to the charms of the Yiddish snail! Tickle the plump chin of the tiny Rosita, baby daughter of Rosella of Daventry and watch her coo with delight! Bibbity bobbity boo and happily-ever-after 'til you drop! Uh...no, not this time.

In a real departure from its predecessors in the King's Quest series, Mask of Eternity enters the realm of real-time 3D, and enters it darkly. Where are Graham, Valanice, Rosella and clan? Not to be found in this chapter of the story (your cheers are overheard). In fact, just about all of the folks of Daventry have been turned to stone (more cheers).

Once upon a time, in some nebulous celestial realm lived a mask. This mask went to all the best schools, studied hard and flirted at the masquerade balls; before too long, it grew up to be the Mask of Eternity, the interface between God (or the gods) and man. The mask represents the face of God and the embodiment of supreme power. Beings called Archons were hired to guard the mask, and one day one of them decided that being an Archon just wasn't everything it was cracked up to be and destroyed the mask in an attempt to take over the universe. The mask exploded into five pieces and this explosion caused (almost) everyone in the world to be turned to stone. One shard remained with the evil Archon, and another just

happened to graze the face of young Connor (your character), saving him from being taken for granite. Surely you have already written the rest: Connor must find the shards, reconstruct the



mask and save the world. Yada-yada-yada. Nothing new here.

What is new is that instead of cloying Disney-esque candy, we'll see Sierra's first 3D adventure game aimed at (guess who) the *Diablo* and *Tomb Raider* crowds – little dialogue, very little to sit back and watch, plenty of action and monsters... and to keep the adventure concourse happy, a puzzle every now and again.

Restoring the mask is, of course, the main quest, but mini-quests abound with many puzzles of the "find the key to the door" variety, and others that are physical in nature ("push the rock over the waterfall", et. al.). Two weapon slots allow you to carry a range and hand-to-hand weapon, replaceable as you find better ones. Gold and health items are scattered about, but there are not many other inventory items. A world map will be given to you by a wizard who

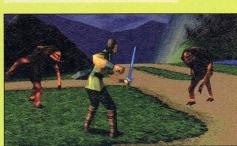
was only half turned to stone; poor guy can talk but his marble lower half prevents him from accomplishing much. You will visit seven worlds and encounter from three to six characters in each with whom to interact, and will come across literature in various places advancing the story. Although the story is somewhat linear, puzzles don't have to be solved in a particular order. Luckily, you will be able to teleport between already-visited areas to avoid continual re-traversing to do things you may have forgotten.

Monsters range from Weepers, who suck the life out of you through their eyes, to Frost Giants (who look a bit like Chewbacca), to the Shadow Demon, who can't be *fought*, but must be dealt with by other means.

As always, the Sierra art teams have been doing their usual brilliant work. The early game already looks great, and definitely has an Eastern and/or ancient-pyramid tone overall. Each of the individual regions has its own particular atmosphere as well. There are swamps, an ice region, the Barrens (lava territory), the City of the Dead and of course Daventry, to name a few. This is a Daventry unlike anything you may have imagined – bleak, gray and overcast – not a tulip in sight.

The entire set of worlds is richly textured and beautifully con-

◆ A grave situation
 Two for one sale on tusked beasts ▼



ceived, thanks to TED and ZED, design tools of the rich and famous. TED is the terrain editor previously used

in Red Baron, and ZED is its cousin, which is based on THREAD, a shareware Quake level editor, purchased by Sierra and thoroughly enhanced to

support texture mapping. Combined with various iterations of the *Cyberstorm* and *EarthSiege* engines, ZED is a remarkable accomplishment allowing one to design 3D levels "on the fly," as it were, building interiors and exteriors simultaneously *and* allowing immediate access to the results — level building made simple.

A couple of questions remain. First, "Will it be fun to play?" Of course, the answer can never be obvious until we do play. King's Quest fans are likely to be shocked at the 3D dungeon crawl elements, and those who eschew King's Quest might not notice its new plumage, although Sierra is bound to make quite sure it's hard to miss. And finally, "Did the Yiddish snail really end up on the cutting room floor?" We hope so. –Cindy Yans

King's Quest VIII: Mask of Eternity · Sierra On-line · Windows 95



"MAN OF WAR petitions those aspects of battle many wargames are still dreaming of properly addressing."

- Evan Brooks/Computer Game Entertainment

"The graphics are phenomenal!"
-Bill Trotter/PC Gamer

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. Large Scale Fleet Actions

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ON "SAIL" IN AUGUST

(Actual in-game graphics)



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PC-CD ROM



s more and more 3D action games hit the shelves, the question inevitably arises: how many first-person shooters can the gaming industry

bear? The flood shows no signs of abating, but it's nice to see that some developers – even ones known for first-person shooters – have decided to branch out in new directions. Case in point: Raven Software. Concurrent with the much-anticipated *Hexen II*, Raven has been developing a less-publicized title called *Mageslayer*. Based on a 3D engine similar, but not identical to, id's *Quake* engine, it boldly eschews the first-person perspective. Instead, *Mageslayer* is played from a overhead view reminiscent of the classic arcade game *Gauntlet*. It promises a new flavor of action

for gamers weary of Quake and its ilk, and could inject new life into an old (and recently neglected) genre of games.

The first question in many gamers' minds will be "Why?" Why translate the freedom of a 3D engine into a simple top-down perspective? Is it just for the sake of novelty – a gimmick to differentiate Mageslayer from a horde of shoot-em-up



clones? Gimmicks abound in the computer gaming industry, but as an extensive look at the *Mageslayer* pre-alpha proved, the top-down perspective has plenty of benefits.

Mageslayer's true 3D environment brings new realism to the normally sprite-based world of top-view action games. Creatures and objects are convincingly solid, while looming walls and towers give a true sense of perspective to the action. Special effects, such as a torrent of rocks cascading from above, or a deadly spider descending on a silken thread, highlight the engine's depth. A dynamic camera zooms in and out to maintain a steady view of your character, and prevents obstacles such as overpasses from getting in the way. Both camera movement and overpasses have been used sparingly, however, to keep the action straightforward and focused. The game will also support Direct3D for those fortunate souls who have 3D accelerator cards.

Though action is the primary focus, the background story has not been neglected. *Mageslayer* is set in a world where mages have become an unruly menace. To combat the power-hungry and war-

Raven revitalizes a genre in disrepair

Majeslayer

◀ A Rat Mage creates a Wererat

like mages, five Mageslayer Clans were formed. The five clans were separate entities, and seldom cooperated despite their common goal. The world's mages were eventually vanquished by these clans, but in the process, one clan was utterly destroyed. Lore Thane, bitter leader of the destroyed clan, now seeks revenge on the others for sitting idly by as his clan was decimated. He has amassed a great army, and now presents a dire threat to the remaining clans. In response, each clan selected its best warrior to combat Lore Thane, and these four individuals are the game's four main characters.

Each character in *Mageslayer* has a distinctive look, and possesses four different attacks plus one special power. Characters' attacks can be powered up with artifacts found throughout the course of the game, while the strength of their special attacks is determined by the number of available mana points. New weapons and attacks are not discovered as power-ups, but instead are "learned" when the character attains a certain number of experience points, injecting a bit of role-playing flavor into an otherwise straightforward action game. Of course, what's an action game without enemies to kill? At present time there are about thirty different monsters, ranging from lowly rats and maggots to Snow Witches and Zombie Lords.

◆ The Warlock prepares for his special attack Mageslayer's levels are simple and elegant ▼

It's the little things that make games great, and even at this early stage, Mageslayer has a lot of great little details. Though linear and relatively simple compared with Quake levels, Mageslayer's levels are both elegantly crafted and filled with interaction: levers and switches, moving bridges, and deadly hazards such as



cannons and crushing walls. Graphic details abound, and special effects appear more frequently in later levels, the better to keep the player interested.

Perhaps the most innovative element is the monster interac-

tion. Certain monsters interact with other monsters to provide a more compelling game experience. For example, a Zombie Lord can summon both Zombies and Maggots. While his summoned Zombies are beating on your character, the Maggots (initially tiny and harmless) will start to feed on one another and grow in size. Eventually they'll get big enough to attack, and you'll have yet another foe to deal with. These types of interactions add depth and novelty to *Mageslayer*, and bring something genuinely unexpected to the game experience.

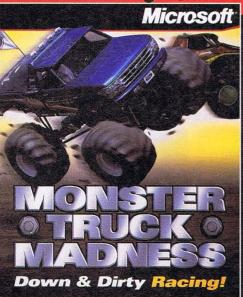
Equal parts *Quake* and *Gauntlet*, with a dash of platform gaming thrown in for good measure, *Mageslayer* takes familiar elements and mixes them into something both exciting and new. Look for it on shelves at the end of summer. –*Joe Grant Bell*

Mageslayer • GT Interactive • Windows 95



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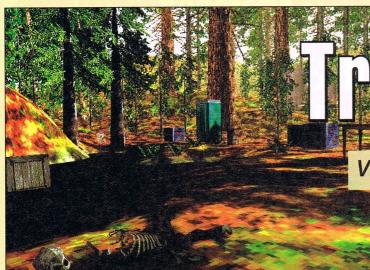








Graphics Blaster 3D



Area 51 contains some disturbing debris

Velociraptors on parade

he perfect combination of art and technology - that is what game development is all about, and that is what Seamus Blackley, Trespasser's executive

producer, aspires to in his latest escapade set in the Lost World universe. Blackley, whose passion for this project may only be matched by his passion for fast cars, is completely dedicated to honing a large number of technologies, the focus of which is to make the island a real place for you to explore, to suspend disbelief, to survive.

Why this particular license? Said Blackley, "Flash to January 1996. My boss, Steven, comes in and says that he wants a digital sequel to The Lost World. And when Steven Spielberg asks, you go, 'OK. OK, that would be cool. Let's do that." Good reason.

You are Anne from Manhattan, on vacation in Costa Rica. Your plane crashes and you wash up on the shore of a (mysterious!) island. Like everyone else on earth, you have read the autobiography of John Hammond, which he wrote right after the court proceedings seen in

the Lost World film in which he was indicted for a number of crimes related to his creation of dinosaurs. Eventually you begin to realize that this is the original research island, which is most likely populated with some very petulant dinosaurs. Blackley feels that this character differs significantly from other adventure game characters because of not only her womanhood, but her general ordinariness. Lara Croft and her extraordinary breasts, for example, would take on this dinosaur infested island by storm. Anne from Manhattan? Scared s#@&less. So much for

backstory. The point of the game is, Do Not Die.

So, minimal plot line, single premise - no one will care. What people want to see here are cool dinosaurs. And from what we've seen, they shouldn't be disappointed. Although there was no gameplay implemented at DreamWorks' demonstration (but their Lost World PlayStation title was up and running), the world building and dinotech are mind-boggling. The PC platform, unlike consoles, gives control of every pixel to the development team... and they seem to be taking advantage of it.

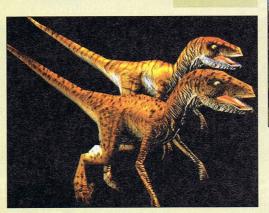
While he certainly does not wear his PhD in Physics on his sleeve, after a moment of listening, one will be convinced that Blackley is extraordinarily insightful about the techniques necessary to generate a completely physics-based gameworld. Not completely satisfied with his Flight Unlimited algorithms, which tended to initiate a "pop" when one neared specific locations, Blackley and his team have created new ones which should eliminate the problem ("snap" and "crackle" will never be the same).

The game is a fully physically-modeled 3D environment, a virtual amusement park, as it were (not surprising that

they hired a guy who designed half of Tokyo Disneyland). You look down and see, oddly enough, yourself. You see your legs react, you see your arm-movement. You pick things up by actually picking them up. If you want to climb over a wall, you can put up a plank against it as a ramp, or stack up rocks and make "stairs." If you want to get into a building you beat the door down with something (What? No slide the paper under the door to get the key from inside puzzles?). The idea is to create not a super simulation of the island, but to create a consistent world where the designers control what works and what doesn't in such a way as to fool us into thinking that everything works.

The dinosaurs themselves are polygon-based creatures built from

The research lab has seen better days > Castor and Pollux V





the skeleton up. Artists study skeletal structure and combine the information we have about dinosaurs with natural extrapolation to design musculature, skin textures and, finally, patterns of movement based on all of these. Seeing the fluid, extremely effective movement of these

creatures would lead one to believe that thousands of polygons have to be involved. Not so. Only about 300 polygons per creature operate in incredibly smooth patterns - not a jagged edge to be seen. With such a low poly count, it is much easier to achieve the kind of high frame-rate/scalable rendering that will allow all machine speeds to maximize results.

"So in effect, like a lot of things, making a 3D game comes down to basically one thing - showmanship," observed Blackley, "making something that is not what it seems, appear to be more than what it is." Now there's a mouthful, as we watch Seamus join the ranks of Houdini, Copperfield, the Ringling Brothers and John Hammond. Look for it this winter. -Cindy Yans

Trespasser • DreamWorks Interactive • Windows '95







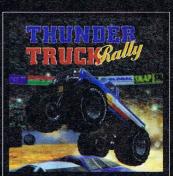
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Holding the high ground is important

A new dimension for real-time strategy gaming

Total Annihi E

T Interactive has made its name (and much of its fortune) distributing big-name 3D shooters like *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D*, so maybe it shouldn't be a surprise that 3D would eventually feature in a strategy game from them. *Total Annihilation*, under construction at its internal development studio Cavedog Entertainment [CGS+ 78], sounds at first like just another Clone & Conquer game: two sides have been fighting across the width of the galaxy for thousands of years. We enter the game universe just as the conflict comes to a head, and gamers get to fight out the final battles of the war from an overhead perspective on a variety of terrain types. Each side will have approximately 25 missions, and missions are played out linearly.

In terms of basic gameplay, *Total Annihilation* remains quite faithful to what is becoming a genre unto itself. Like *Command & Conquer* or *Warcraft II*, there is no strategic game (it's all tactical combat), you build bases and collect resources, and you send forces into desper-

ate combat. While it doesn't go into very different game-play territory like Bungie's Myth, this doesn't mean it's a me-too game like so many we'll see this year. Instead, the addition of a true 3D engine lifts the game into new territory; even the early version we saw felt... different, and it's the 3D and its subtle (and not so subtle) effects on the game that make it so.

Some games have already claimed 3D, and many more coming out are going to, but in most cases this is either just eye-trickery or pseudo-3D, with layering of 2D map tiles. For Total Annihilation Chris Taylor (designer, lead programmer, and chief banana fetcher) and his team are implementing a tile-less world, one that is built upon an underlying 3D geometry that is surprisingly realistic. When you watch units move across the screen, your jaw begins to drop (just a tad - you don't want to look silly) as you see them rocking and tilting on the undulations, slowing on the uphill, passing beneath trees and showing different faces. The 3D isn't limited to the terrain, either;

units themselves are tiny little polygonal models (instead of sprites) and are rendered on the fly. Because of this the amount of visual detail just explodes; tank turrets are articulated, guns recoil realisti-

cally, planes roll and pitch, and destroyed vehicles scatter into little polygonal bits. One KBOT – Kinetic Bio-Organic Technology – has a flame thrower with a single polygon pilot light! Amazingly, this will all be done with only 256 colors and without requiring 3D accelerator support.

While all the 3D makes for lots of eye candy, it's the realistic (within limits) physics that really makes the 3D special; high ground now means something, and holding it will be a critical factor in many missions. Shells lobbed successfully on one world may not travel as far in another, and wind speed and direction will play into all sorts of tactics. As with *Myth*, physics means gamers will constantly experience the unexpected; it's happened to the designers, and it will take lots of testing to make certain none of these effects are game-breakers.



Some units are partially amphibious – they can wade out into the water to a certain depth – while others are totally so, either skimming the surface or walking the ocean or river floor upon an unsuspecting enemy

Because the units are polygonbased, they don't take up a lot of space, averaging about 25K for graphic model and unit information. Because of this, the game will ship with about 150 units/buildings (75 per side), and Cavedog plans to make new units available on a regular basis (about once a week) on their web site (www.cavedog.com). This should keep multiplayer gamers hopping; as GT Interactive's Lance Seymour said, "The game is going to be constantly changing for those people that get set in their strategies and ways." By the time you read this Cavedog should have a unit viewer available online, along with a selection of units from the game for players to examine. In addition to these freebies, there are plans for extensive add-on packs, including new units, new missions, and even special 32MG monster maps (the game will ship with a few to whet your appetite).

Of course, all the flash and bang in the world doesn't mean a thing without gameplay, and GT Interactive and Cavedog know this. When they finish up the programming they plan to spend a solid three months just play balancing and working out any kinks.

This time will be what really determines if the game is a winner. It already has us excited by its potential. – Scott Udell

Total Annihilation • GT Interactive • Windows 95





F/A-18: HORNETS:



"The cockpit is a dead-on duplicate of the real thing and features all of the Hornet's authentic radar modes and sub-modes."

PC Gamer



"The flight model on this baby is

excellent and after several hours of flying around you can almost imagine you're in the real thing.

-Strategy Plus

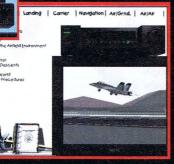


"Avionics modeling is its forte, and even a quick glance at the instrument pannel ñ a dead ringer for the one in the real plane ñ should tell you that this is one serious simulation."

—Computer Gaming World

"Unbelievable! If you want the full metal jacket military experience, this has everything but a bugle blowing at 4:30 A.M."

-MacHome Journal















Meridian 59: Revelation

The virtual online world doesn't quit

Imost a year and a half ago, when Ultima Online was still in early infancy, we got a call from a little startup company in Berkley called Archetype Interactive. "You really have to see this, they told us. "It will revolutionize the concept of online role-playing forever." We said, "Sure, why not?" (skeptical but open). And they sent us a beta of Meridian 59, one of the, if

not the very first fully

implemented interactive

MUD-style game offering a

virtual world in 3D graphics.

It was a bit gawky, especially in beta, but showed an immense amount of promise, given the lack of anything else like it at the time. 3DO agreed, and acquired Archetype and the Meridian team in June of 1996. Since then, Meridian has been up and running with well over three million hours logged. Citizens of the Meridian world are a committed group from 53 countries who play on average more than 60 hours a month, and their ruling entity is the powerful Duke.

Although the Duke's world is virtual, the community that inhabits it is very real indeed. Hence, the design philosophy is, "to listen to our users, observe, react, plan and

Nice cleavage; Pleated skirts were all the rage in medieval times

grow in a constant, organic process." An expansion pack (Vale of Sorrow) was released

in March of this year and now, this fall, we can expect Keep away an even larger development in a dark alley - an entirely new Meridian 59 in the form of Revelation.

The development team has doubled in size and are working on a number of new innovations. The world size will be 50% larger than before and will include a new island city featuring its own culture, language, and clothing. Getting there will be half the battle, and once there, players will encounter a dark and

disturbing quest and a new race of beings. More than

30 new

He must be a boar at parties

and Vladmir the Thug) leave the horse's head at home; or www.travel-net.com/~dagwood/ (Sacred Order of Emperor Penguins; considered the "lighter side" of Meridian guilds). And players are certain to continue the on-line nuptial tradition. Congratulations to the lovely Alpha who was wed to

Shang the Almighty

> February 3, 1997. The bride wore plate.

Event management, which has been very successful in the past will continue to

operate, coming up with new and creative ways to entertain. Highlights in the past have included The Royal Guild Tournament (team warfare with prizes), the Reign of Blood Frenzy (period of time when killing sprees are not punishable by law), Prisoner Escapes (virtual posse), Royal Lotteries (you have to be in it to win it) and Meridian Trivia Contests (the Meridian card set for Trivial Pursuit).

3DO maintains the server for Meridian with an ultra-high-speed T-3 connection similar to the ones most players probably have in their homes (!), and connects directly to a Tier One ISP. So does Origin

have anything to worry

about here? I'd buy a ticket to see the Duke take on Lord British.

-Cindy Yans



Did he come to us from Rama?

NPCs A cousin to the will **HOMM Sprite** interact

players based on mood and individual character action, and new spells and weapons will be available to titillate even the most jaded gamer. Monsters can now ally with one another, or can be tamed by players to ally with them.

An enhanced graphics engine will provide more realistic buildings and terrain, and

players will now be able to have lockers, err, individual storage areas for valuables... (shades of "Wait a minute, I gotta stop at my locker" or "Do you remember my locker combination?" or "Would you please store my gym socks in your locker?")

First person 3D graphics will continue to keep players face-to-face with one another, and the hundreds of guilds that exist will continue to conduct business as usual. You can visit some of the more interesting guilds at www.geocities.com/Area51/Corridor/342/ index.html (La Familia, run by the Don, and including members like Guido the Enforcer

"THOSE PUNDITS WHO SAY NETSCAPE IS THE NET'S KILLER APP OBVIOUSLY DON'T GIVE A DARN ABOUT PLAYING GAMES ONLINE: IF THEY DID, THEY'D KNOW THAT KALI HOLDS THAT TITLE. WITH A RIDICULOUSLY LOW REGISTRATION FEE, LIFETIME UPGRADES, AND FREE PLAY ON KALI SERVERS, THERE'S NO REASON EVERY GAMER IN THE FREE WORLD SHOULDN'T PICK UP THIS AMAZING SHAREWARE PROGRAM."

STEPHEN POOLE GAMESPOT

"THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF KALI ALONE ARE ENOUGH TO EARN OUR AWARD ICG PREMIER AWARD, BUT THE LOW PRICE, FREE UPGRADES, AND UNLIMITED PLAY CEMENT THE DECISION. HATS OFF TO CREATOR JAY COTTON."

MAY 97 ISSUE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

AND WHO SAYS MOUTE NEWER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING BY PLAYING GAMES?

"LIKE MANY OF US, JAY COTTON JUST WANTED TO PLAY DOOM. NOW HE FINDS HIMSELF AT THE CENTER OF A FULL-FLEDGED GAMING REVOLUTION. HE IS A MOSES LEADING GAMERS TO THE PROMISED LAND OF HEAD-TO-HEAD GAMING. A CHE GUEVARA FREEING THEM FROM THE SHACKLES OF SUBSCRIPTION GAMING SERVICES."

TI LIAM MCDONALDI BOOT

"KALI IS THE ONE SERVICE IN THIS REVIEW THAT IMPRESSED US THE MOST.... LOTS OF PLAYERS, LOTS OF GAMES, GOOD PERFORMANCE, AND A DIRT-CHEAP, ONE-TIME CHARGE. WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK FOR IN AN ONLINE GAMING SERVICE?"

MIGUIND DE MAGNETINE

"KALI . . . MAY BE THE SYSTEM THAT PUTS THE BIG-NAME GAMING NETWORKS OUT OF BUSINESS."

APRIL 1997 ISSUE PC GAMER



Command Post

Clone & Conquer roll call

bit of a short column this month because I wanted to present... The List. The List is the catchy name I've given to the two sheets of paper on my wall upon which I write the name of the latest Clone & Conquer game. Everyone in the office knows about The List, and they take great delight in presenting me with another entry – they love to see my look of dismay; dismay because it's my job to keep track of these things, and so many of them sound and look alike, with minor differences, that it's getting really tough. Those of you who've visited the strategy forum on our web site (www.cdmag.com) may already be familiar with The List, as I've been posting most additions to it there as soon as I hear of them. I'm a tad proud of The List, as it's gaining me my only bit of notoriety on the 'net - "Oh yeah, you're the guy with The List." A couple of notes on The List: some of these games don't have publishers yet (WoSo, for example, is being developed in Italy and is looking for a home in North America), and some are only titles we've been given; expect some of these to drop from development schedules, but count on additions all the time (especially with the big Electronic Entertainment Expo just around the corner). There is no particular order to The List beyond when I first wrote the game down (excepting games that have already shipped, at the top of the list).

As you may already know, "Clone & Conquer" is my label for games that are trying to cash in on the craze started by Command & Conquer and Warcraft II. All the games on The List are real-time



▲ Even some other strategy games, like LucasArts Rebellion or THQ's Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain will feature Clone & Conquer-ish elements (picture: tactical space combat from Pax Imperia)

A combat screen from WoSo: The Economical Conflict ▼



strategy games, but not all real-time strategy games are on The List; SimCity 3000, for example, is realtime but doesn't fall into the Clone & Conquer category (whereas the tentatively named LunaSim does, because in addition to lunar city building it features combat... making it sound, ironically, like Sierra's upcoming Outpost 2). It may well be that some of the games on The List will eventually fall off; for example, Sirtech's Virus and Siege games don't look much like C&C, even though they are real-time and have a combat component. Games that really belong on The List have a heavy combat component, are real-time, and have some kind of overhead view that you control your units from; in short, games that look something like C&C or Warcraft.

Games on The List aren't necessarily bad games, it's just that they aren't terribly original – the popularity of

something else is what's triggering their development. In the best case, the "triggering" occurs in the mind of a designer who says "Hey, that's neat but I can do it one better"; in the worst case "trig-

The List

	ine List	
#	Game Name	Company
1	Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Westwood Studios
2	Enemy Nations ¹	Windward Studios
3	Krush, Kill, 'n' Destroy (KKND)1	Electronic Arts
4	Magic the Gathering: Battlemage ¹	Acclaim
5	Star Command ¹	GT Interactive
6	Golgotha	Crack Dot Com
7-	Starcraft	Blizzard
8	Command & Conquer 2	Westwood Studios
9	Dark Reign	Activision
10	Mission to Nexus Prime	DigiFX
11	Myth	Bungie Software
12	Conquest Earth	Eidos
13	Batletech: Mech Commander	MicroProse
14	Devil's Own ²	Microsoft
15	The Tone Rebellion	Broderbund
16	Scarab ²	Eternal Software ³
17	Dominion	7th Level
18	7th Legion	Epic Megagames
19	Waterworld	Interplay
20	War Breeds	Broderbund
21	Uprising	3D0
22	Evolution	Discovery
23	Dark Colony	SSI
24	W.A.R., Inc	Interactive Magic
25	The LED Wars	IONOS
26	Silent Fear	Interplay
27	Submarine Titans	Megamedia
28	Outpost 2	Sierra
29	Cyberstorm 2	Sierra
30	Final Conflict	Sound Source Interactiv
31	Age of Empires	Microsoft
32	Stoned ²	Virgin
34	Extreme Tactics WarGames	Media Station ³ MGM Interactive
35	WoSo: The Economical Conflict	
36	M.A.X. II	Imaginaction ³ Interplay
37	WarWind II	SSI
38	Warhammer II	SSI
39	Siege	Sirtech
40	Virus	Sirtech
41	Total Annihilation	Cavedog
42	Stranded	IONOS
43	LunaSim²	Maxis
44	Clay Warfare ²	Maxis
45	Kaiju	DigiFX
46	Undead Wars	DigiFX
47	Toy Wars	DigiFX
48	Enclave	DigiFX
10		Digit X

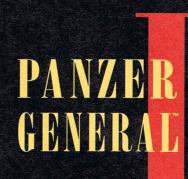
1 = Game has been released

2 = Tentative title

3 = Developer only; no publisher yet

gering" sets off a corporate type who sees 1.5 million copies of *Red Alert* sold and says "We gotta change all our strategy games to be like that!"

Eventually the craze will settle down and games of this ilk will become a genre unto themselves, and designers won't have C&C on their minds when they sit down to create their games. This was finally happening to the world of 3D shooters until Quake came out – now again we have Quake clones instead of new games in the genre – and it happened long ago in adventure land (do you ever really think of an adventure as a Zork clone or a Kings Quest clone any more?). For now, though, we get Clone & Conquer, and The List grows longer. –Scott Udell



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On War

The "KEY" to success

"If you can be seen, you can be hit. If you can be hit, you can be killed."

ince you have to see to hit and kill, place your units where they can see but minimize the enemy's ability to see and hit you. An excellent technique uses keyhole positions in coordination with Target Reference Points (TRPs).

The tank platoon, outlined in blue in Figure 1, occupies a keyhole position. The position protects the platoon from enemy

fire and observation while enabling him to fire into the kill zone. The reason this works is that an armored vehicle's crew observes most closely to their front. Hence, they are vulnerable to flank attack. At the same time the hills and trees protect our tank platoon from being seen by the enemy. A platoon can kill most, if not all, of a tank battalion with this technique. The Headquarters Section, circled in white, is too exposed and I lost it within five turns. The TOW platoon (Red Box) occupies a keyhole position

You can also place units on the reverse slopes of hills. The friendly unit shoots the enemy in the rear as they drive by. Unfortunately, most games give a unit 360 degree vision and this tactic may not work as well in a game as it does in real life. Digging in helps reduce vulnerability.

deeper in the battalion battle position.

Target Reference Points

TRPs coordinate indirect and direct fires. Examine the map for avenues of approach and place the TRPs where you want to kill the enemy. TacOps allows you to direct a unit to fire at a TRP and a radius around that point. Most other games don't support TRPs, but you can at least use them mentally. Refine unit positions with a Line of Sight function. This is time consuming - an hour or more - but worth the effort, because a properly placed defense usually requires only minor changes once the game starts.

In Figure 2, I used three TRPs to coordinate the company's fires. Each platoon has a TRP. This method helps ensure your company shoots each vehicle only once. The 1st Platoon shoots at TRP1 (Red line), the 2nd, TRP2 (White), and 3rd at - you guessed it -TRP3 (Blue Line). Another method of fire distribution would have 1st Platoon shooting at TRP 2 and 2nd at TRP1. Crossing fires may help set up flank shots. The HQ Section observes the entire engagement area from his position (and is less exposed than in

KEYHOLE POSITION KILL ZONE

▲ Figure 1: Kill zones and keyhole positioning Figure 2: Three TRPs for three platoons ▼

田田田田田

◀ Figure 3: The M901 ITV – a long shooter, but keep it safe

Figure 1). The engagement shouldn't start until the enemy's lead vehicles reach TRP2.

You can also use TRPs to disengage. If the enemy gets too many vehicles in front of a specific TRP (say 10), then it

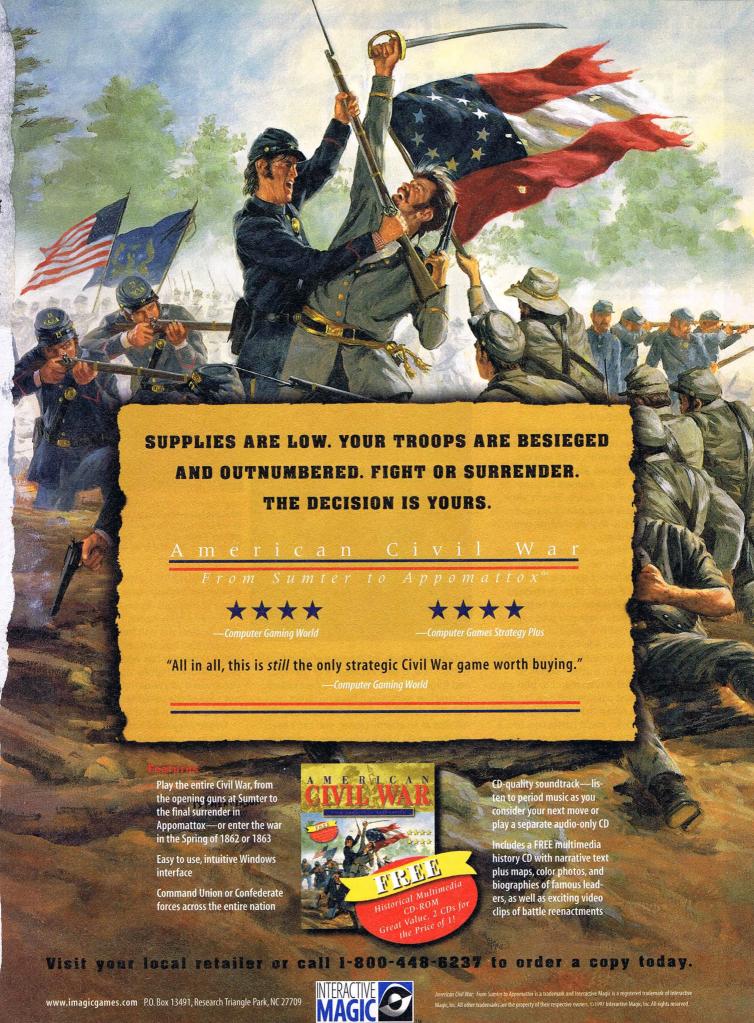
may be time to leave. Consider leaving a battle position when the enemy is 1200-1600 meters away, unless your fire is extremely effective. Disengage by section or platoon to keep direct fire on the enemy. Use smoke and artillery fire to impede his movement. If you don't he can beat you to the next position and destroy you.

Both Steel Panthers II and TacOps support a "Weapons On/Off mode," enabling you to force units to hold their fire. This allows you to turn them all on at once to deliver a massive volley once the enemy is well into your kill zone or to spring an ambush. Worth thinking about, especially for infantry defense on the reverse slope or in keyhole positions where you don't want to reveal your presence too soon. Another use of this feature is to keep from wasting machine gun fire on armored vehicles.

On your TOWs

TOW missiles are an extremely deadly weapon, but are handicapped by their low

rate of fire (1 round per minute) and low number of rounds carried (10 - 12 per vehicle). Their high Probability of Hit and Kill offset these weaknesses, because they virtually assure you of a kill. ITVs are lightly armored, and a battalion only has 12 of them, so place them with care. Don't just use them against a generic target such as "tanks." Instead, use them against unique vehicles: Air Defense Vehicles, Field Artillery Pieces, Engineer Vehicles, and, if you can tell them apart, command and control vehicles. Taking out these vehicles enables you to use your other systems more effectively. Proper use of TOWs, as discussed last month, can really help a SEAD mission and increase an air attack's effectiveness. In certain periods the M551's and M60A2's Shillelagh missile is just as effective. The Sheridan is the last vehicle in the Army shooting the Shillelagh and will be out of the inventory this summer. The M901 will be leaving soon, too. - Michael K. Robel



Fragile Allegiance

Ten irritating reasons to avoid this game

Interplay Productions, Gremlin Interactive and Cajji Software have attempted to combine two current industry rages: real-time and space conquest strategy games. I mention all three developers because every time you start up Fragile Allegiance, each has a video introduction that you have to ESCape from. This is the first thing that will irritate you.

The object of the game is... unclear. You are the newest employee of TetraCorp, a mega-corporation straight out of pulp sci-fi. The intro hints at subterfuge and an alien menace, but none of this has appeared in any of the games played during the review period. The only goal you're striving for is to make cash, which is all well and good in real life (where you can spend it on computer software) but boring as hell in a game. That's irritant number two.

The environment is an asteroid field, and your job is to set up colonies on these rocks and mine the ore within. Once you've mined out an asteroid, you can maintain a presence on it, which appears to generate some trickle flow of income. Exactly what causes this trickle is just one of many details not covered in the shoddy manual, which is irritant number three.

This being real-time, the game has three speed settings. Early on, when there isn't much to do, the fastest speed is ideal. Later, when you have a dozen or more colonies going, the slowest speed would be great. But forget that, because once you start a game, you cannot change the speed of it. That is irritant number four, and it's a mind-blower.

The interface is beautiful, but extremely mouse intensive. Each action seems to require a new full-screen menu to pop up. RSI sufferers *must* pass on this one. It'll kill you otherwise. And if the term "click-fest" raises your hackles, you'd better run, too. A smoother interface would've gone far to help this game. Irritant number five.

Multiplayer is included, but the idea of getting together with someone to play as time consuming a game as this (a current game is into its 25th hour) is ludicrous. Set goals would help to focus the game and make it manageable for multi-player action. Maybe. Irritant number six.

Rather than a technology tree, you can buy blueprints for new weapons and equipment from Sci-Tech, the "sister corporation" of TetraCorp. While this fits in well with the fiction, it somehow isn't as satisfying as figuring out things for yourself, since there's no sense of discovery (all the blueprints are on display from the start of the game – it's just a matter of getting the cash to pay for them.) Seven.



Combat (which, for the sake of your fiscal bottom line, is best avoided) is of the "fire and forget" variety. You issue a fleet orders to attack or retreat, but have no direct control of the individual ships. In fact, if you fire missiles at an enemy planet, you can't even see the results (unless you have a spy satellite circling). Another detail that, while realistic, still disappoints. Eight.

A continual series of warnings and informational messages will be broadcast at you. Some are critical, some can be ignored. There is no way to filter out the ones you don't want to hear. That's number nine.

Not everything about the game is irritating, and there are some great ideas in *Fragile Allegiance*. The asteroids drift through space, wandering in and out of fleet range of one another (asteroid engines can be built later in the game). Diplomacy is a quantifiable commodity, in that you set up a non-aggression pact for a set number of days, and if you break it, you'll be fined. It will often take several rounds of going back and forth with an

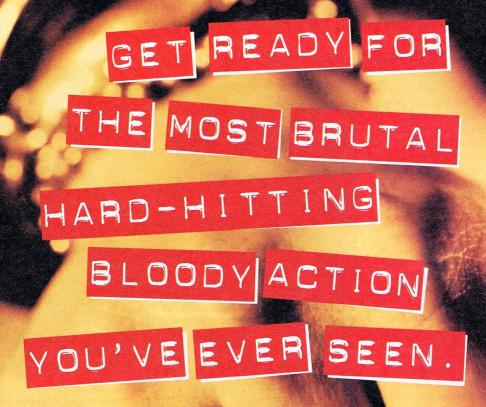
alien ambassador – changing the handful of diplomatic variables available – before you come to mutually agreeable terms.

There's a fairly strong trading sub-game here. Traders will visit from time to time, and you can also buy and sell from alien ambassadors. Interplay has wisely included a "past price history" chart for each commodity, so you know if you're getting a good deal or not. One of the better-implemented features of the game, but it's strictly a sideshow.

Fragile Allegiance has an excellent game buried in it... somewhere. This is the kind of product that, with the right mega-patch, could go from shelfware to a permanent place on your hard drive. But all the irritants build up to the point where the "Quit Game" button is the only relief you'll find. But wait. After you hit that button you have to ESCape through several screens of credits. Every time you exit. And that, finally, is ten. –Peter Smith

Fragile Allegiance

Interplay • www.interplay.com •
Requirements: DOS, 486 DX2/66, 8MB RAM
(16 to run under Windows 95), 2X CD ROM
• Multiplayer: 2-8 players, IPX, modem,
null-modem



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Napoleon in Russia

Cossacks and redoubts and wolf pits, oh my!

apoleon in Russia is the second game produced in the Battleground series with a Napoleonic land battle theme. In this depiction of the epic struggle at Borodino, TalonSoft surpasses the earlier released Waterloo in both scope and grandeur. This event was Napoleon's last desperate attempt, during the Campaign of 1812, to engage the elusive Russian armies with the hope of destroying them. Fought primarily on September 7th, this immortalized conflict involved about 250,000 men and more than 1,200 cannon. With hundreds of units to command in some of the full-battle scenarios, just getting through one fifteen-minute game turn can become a daunting task.

If micro-managing large numbers of troops is not a problem for you, then the amount of time it might take could become a concern. For those of you who already have a life, the Command Control option will allow you to issue orders to your subordinates, permitting the computer to handle the mundane tasks associated with executing them. Or you could tackle one of the shorter but no less challenging scenarios covering a particular phase of the engagement. Of course, the game also provides a couple of useful player aids for those of us who prefer to march in the mud. One method allows you to view the organizational structure and original strength of a unit or leader, in the Unit List, with the right mouse button. This feature, along with the Show Organization option (Display Menu), proved invaluable to me when trying to manually maintain divisional and brigade integrity for command control purposes. The game delivers 21 scenarios that are almost equally split between the what-if and the historical categories. The scenarios range in length from eight to 52 game turns with a varied selection that will accommodate most anyone's playing schedule. While the historical scenarios represent a thorough cross-section of the actual battle, it is the many what-if scenarios that offer some intriguing insights into the lost opportunities that Napoleon or Kutusov, for one reason or another, failed to act upon. There is even an independent scenario covering the French retreat from Moscow through the same corpse-littered battlefield a month and a half later.

There are several game rule options that can be set for a scenario to enhance realism. However, the brief rule descriptions left me wondering to what degree these options would influence overall play balance. Although the effects are applied to both sides, a closer look reveals that the Russian



player would derive some benefit from rules covering Isolation and Line Movement Restrictions. In the former certain Russian units are immune from the adverse effects of isolation, and in the latter the French player (with the burden of attack) would be compelled to use only column movement during any advance towards enemy positions – much to the delight of Russian gunners.

Another game concept called Threat Value may adversely affect your unit's ability to change formation based upon the close proximity of enemy units. The higher the enemy threat value to your unit the more likely it will fail a formation change, thereby becoming disordered in the attempt. Unfortunately, no parameter data is provided to help you decide what level of threat gives you what chance of failure. I have seen units fail to change formation with a threat value of only two in the hex. There is also missing parameter data for formation changes in general. I had to use the trial-and-error method of determining how much

[top to bottom]

Organization information is critical for command control

The snapshot feature saves memorable battle scenes

Formation changes must pass a threat check and risk disorder

it cost to change an infantry battalion from column into line (six movement points).

Everything considered, there is much to appreciate in this successor to Waterloo. Visually, a new 3D Extreme Zoom-out view comes in handy for grasping the larger picture with formations still identifiable by unit type. There is the standard marshal music for background noise and a game playback feature that makes reliving any battle a breeze. In addition, a handy snapshot feature allows you to capture your exciting battle scenes in a BMP file format. The miniatures style and the costume drawings continue to enhance the appeal of this game series covering a colorful period in military history. If classic set-piece battles of Napoleonic warfare are your interest, then this is a worthy addition to any PC game or history library. -Mark McIntosh



Napoleon in Russia: Battleground 6

TalonSoft • www.talonsoft.com • Requirements: Windows, 486DX/33 or higher, 8MB, 2X CD-ROM • Mutliplayer: 2 players, Internet, modem, null-modem, e-mail or hot-seat

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Bull Run

Near-perfect Civil War combat

ver the last year TalonSoft has continued to refine their battleground series. *Bull Run*, covering both First and Second Manassas, is their latest offering and veterans of the series will notice only incremental changes over any quantitative jumps. What they will find is a highly polished system of Nineteenth century combat that is near perfect.

Bull Run continues TalonSoft's blend of multimedia gloss with a rock-solid regimental-level wargame. The game combines period accurate music, re-enactment FMV sequences, and convincing armament sound effects to deliver TalonSoft's trademark "You are there" experience. The reenactment sequences are entertaining enough to leave toggled on far longer than most other competitors' efforts. The artillery sequences are especially well done and worth the slight delay in game play to view.

The isometric map depicts the area around Manassas accurately with its lush woods, rolling fields, and gentle hills. The land areas presented varies with First and Second Manassas respectively. Though the map still cannot be rotated to explore the far side of hills and ravines, it is easily among the best looking playing fields seen to date in a wargame. If you're patient enough and explore the map hexby-hex you'll find a few Easter eggs to chuckle at, too

As mentioned, the game is regimentally based on a grand tactical scale. Newcomers to the series will initially struggle to keep brigades and divisions together to take advantage of the command benefits of their leaders. This task has been made easier with a redesigned "Highlight" menu where the player can quickly toggle between disrupted, detached, isolated, and other practical categories. Formations are still limited to column and line options and the game ignores the use of skirmishers. Though this has upset most hardcore grognards, in the larger scenarios there're more than enough units to handle without the addition of dozens of micro units. A possible compromise would have been an option to toggle the use of skirmishers on or off with abstract changes reflected in the unit's attack and defensive values, as seen in SSI's Age of Rifles.

One of the most noteworthy new additions to TalonSoft's engine is the inclusion of Internet play. This has been extremely well implemented. Players with access to a TCP/IP connection can engage in head-to-head play for the cost of a local phone call and the connect charges of their Internet provider. The movement of enemy units is



[top to bottom]

There are two levels of more traditional wargaming views

It's a bit unnerving to see famous leaders such as Sherman in the thick of combat at First Manassas



seen as they come into view, as opposed to the playback function of email contests. This can have quite an emotional impact when one sees a divison's worth of hostile units roll out of a patch of woods unexpectedly. There is a "chat" box which will let participants banter back and forth. Players also have the option of selecting their preferences for the FMV sequences, background music, and display settings independently of what their opponent chooses.

Bull Run is a history lesson in itself. Both battles at Manassas Junction are represented by a wide variety of historical and "what-if" scenarios. This includes the preguels to both battles at Blackburn's Ford and Brawner's Farm. It's interesting to see famous high level leaders such as Longstreet and Sherman in relatively lowly positions of brigade commanders at First Manassas. It's also a bit unnerving to send these same commanders into the thick of melee combat. One can also watch the development of famous units such as the Second Wisconsin from an "average" unit at First Manassas into one of the elite fighting units of the Iron Brigade (correctly named Gibbon's Black Hat Brigade at Second Manassas).

There is little not to like in *Bull Run*. If I could make two changes it would be the addition of an on-screen display of movement costs. To mentally factor in the terrain costs, elevation changes, and formation effects when making a critical movement decision is overly burdensome. I would also bring back the hex shaped outline that highlights the target of opposing fire. It has been changed to a square. This has incensed veterans to the point of starting Internet petitions to bring back the old display.

If you're a Civil War buff, Bull Run is a must buy. You'll gain additional insights into the period while having a grand time recreating these two pivotal battles.

-Chuck Klimushyn

Bull Run: Battleground 7

TalonSoft • www.talonsoft.com • Requirements: Windows, 486DX/33 or higher, 8MB, 2X CD-ROM • Mutliplayer: 2 players, Internet, modem, null-modem, e-mail or hot-seat



Cheat Thrills

The SAPpy readers speak out

few months ago, I made a little request for one-sentence game pitches, ones that could be eligible for our 1997 SAP (Special Achievement in Popularity) Awards. The response was overwhelming - hundreds, even thousands, of responses were sent in. Well, okay. Maybe 20, but here's a sampling of the what's come in so far (at least the ones that could be printed in the magazine).

From Taxman2204: SimProctologist -You assed for it, now here it is. [huh huh, he

Cat Hunter 3D - Spay and neuter in real time 3D.

From Paul Holzberger, Jr.: A Fan's Revenge - You're a loyal sports fan and your team's star athlete is sitting out the seventh game of the playoffs because he couldn't find his lucky jock strap, and you happen to bump into him with an assault weapon in your hand, and revenge on your mind.



From Kevin Gentry: Michael Jackson's House of Horrors - You play the part of 10 year old Mac Culprit, trying to find clues to escape Michael's dungeon before he catches up to you

and performs an intimate version of his song "Beat It."

Trapped in the Vatican -From the folks who brought you Michael Jackson's House of Horrors, this first-person shooter puts you in the shoes of 12

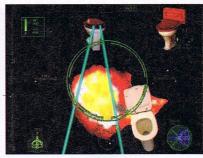
year-old alter boy Bobby O'Brian, battling off priests and pontiffs at every corner.

SimLibrarian 3000AD - Over 27 years in the making, and using numerous real-life librarians as consultants, this game puts you through the trials and tribulations of your local library hero. Warning: contains graphic violence and fullfrontal nudity.

Wig Commander - Playing the part of the president for the Hair Club for Men, this action adventure puts you on a quest for the ultimate rug.

From Andy Wyse: X-CON -Kill your way through 10 cities in search of the evil probation officer.

Heroes of Absolutely Nothing - Fight no one for the control







Clockwise from top right: Use the john Luke, in Wing Commode 5: Dromedary Strike; The last game you'll ever desire, PongCruiser 3000AD; Taking on the feline hordes, armed only with your spay-d, in the soon-to-be-legendary Cat Hunter 3D; A Fan's Revenge steps up to the plate; Real-time strategy gets seedy with Whorecraft 3: Portals of Desire

Need for Speed II

From the main menu, type these codes for different vehicles:

CHEATER

BUS School bus **VWBUG** VW Beetle VW Fastback **VWFB** Big truck SEMI Mazda Miata MIATA

MERCEDES Mercedes-Benz **Volvo Station Wagon VOLVO**

BMW Mercedes Unimog Truck ARMYTRUCK

Mercedes Unimog Truck SNOWTRUCK

VANAGON VW Van JEEPYJ Jeep YJ

Toyota Landcruiser LANDCRUISER

QUATTRO **Audi Sport Quattro**

COMMANCHE Commanche Pick-Up Truck

To get a hidden track, type: **HOLLYWOOD** Monolithic Studios:

Hollywood

For additional options, type: SLIP Slip & slide mode

PIONEER Extra hp

Perfect Weapon

Type GMGODM for invincibility. The level codes are as follows:

ICE DBDBBABA GARDEN ADDCAADC FOREST ACBABBCC **DESERT** ADDDCACC

PROTEUS DDBDBBCA

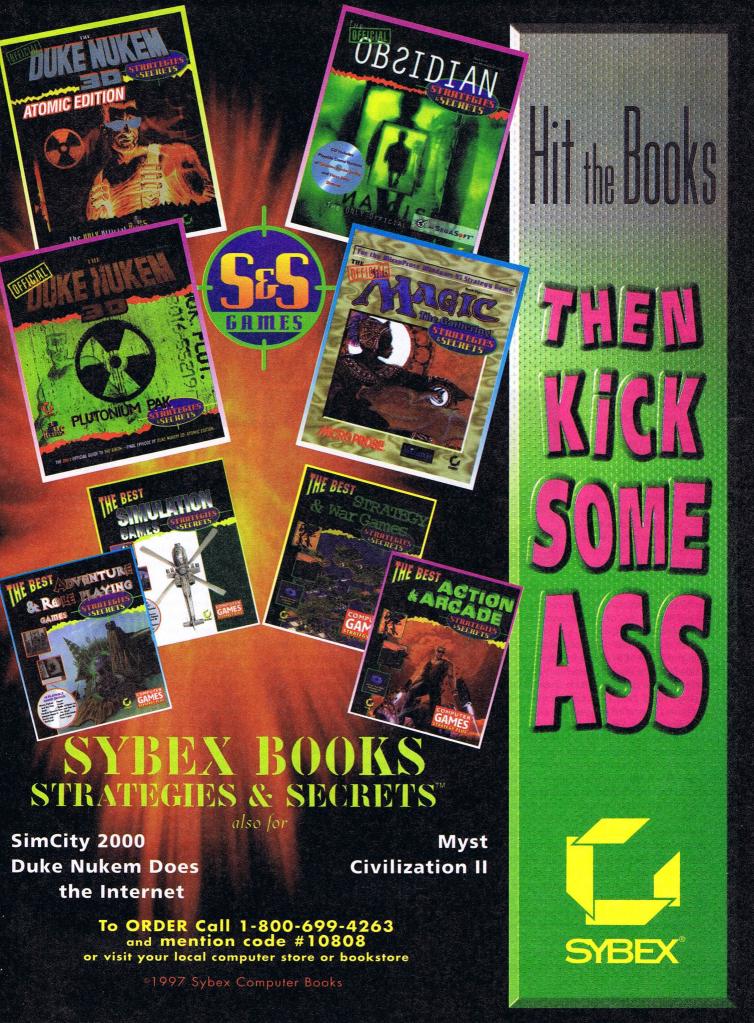
of nothing and gain no fame or respect from none of the people. [I think I've played this game before... I think it was called Outpost].

From Phil Thé: Wing Commode V: Dromedary Strike - My Camel stars as the erratic leader of the 358th Bactrian's in Origin's latest space flight-simulator; scheduled to hit the fans (pun intended) in

From Bob Mayer: Whorecraft III: Portals of Desire - The Orcs are gone but the Alliance has collapsed; now the factionalized races release their courtesans, streetwalkers and pimps on each other across the surface of Azeroth.

From our staff: PongCruiser 3000AD - The classic game, with fuzzy logic ball physics and a neural net opponent Al. Requires a 3D accelerator card and is optimized for the Pentium II processor. Due out in 2004AD.

Note: no cats were harmed in the making of this article. Keep those games coming to sbauman@cdmag.com. -Steve Bauman



MDK

Massively and Decidedly Klever

hiny Entertainment once made a game, Earthworm Jim, and it was good. They took a standard type of game (the 2D platform run and jump sorta thing) and made it really weird, with a segmented hero, flying cows and weird sound effects. You name it, Shiny threw it in there. And it worked. Beautifully.

Enter MDK. Unburdened by the limitations of the 8- and 16-bit console systems, Shiny has pulled out all of the stops, requiring Pentiums and supporting 3D accelerators, and produced a product that also falls into a standard game type – the 3D action game. And again, they've made it weird, delivering an incredibly well-designed and entertaining game that manages to take the

3D shooter genre into strange and unusual places. And it has flying cows. And it works. Beautifully.

You control Kurt Hectic, world savior, who's trying to save earth from an invading horde of aliens known as Stream Riders. With help from Dr. Fluke and his dog Max, you fight the aliens in six cities around the world (no doubt the designers' hometowns). Kurt has a body suit that can absorb a

certain amount of damage, a parachute that resembles a ribbon, and an incredibly cool sniper helmet that can target enemies from hundreds of yards away.

This sniper mode is just one of the many things that set MDK apart from the pack. Aside from the obvious benefits, such as being able to take out certain enemies with a single head-shot, it has also allowed the designers to reward players who plan long-distance attacks. For example, you could run into an open area and try to blast everyone; meanwhile, the alarms sound and the reinforcements start pouring in. Alternately, you could hide further away and shoot out the hinges that hold a door to a building, causing it to fall on the bad guys and the alarm.

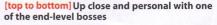
Another standout aspect of the game is the overall design of the levels. The physical design of the levels shows Shiny's roots in the console platform game, where you follow a linear path through a level, taking detours here and there to discover weird secret areas full of lots of goodies. More rigid in design than *Tomb Raider*, it nonetheless gives you the appearance of complete freedom (in fact, you can travel back and forth between most areas). You can argue the freedom vs. linear design philosophy, but



the fact is players will wander aimlessly unless they have a fairly rigid path to follow. You'll rarely get stuck in *MDK*, but you will be challenged.

In addition to being challenging, the levels can be downright odd. There's one area that looks like the most fake garden you've ever been in, with one-dimensional trees and a plastic-looking sky. It turns out that it is a fake garden. Then there're the wonderful puzzles, from the visually impressive – being able to shoot a globe repeatedly to get it rotating until it spins of its axis and drops through the floor, allowing you to follow it into a new location – to the bizarre – the end-level boss that requires food... well, we don't want to give too much away there.

On the graphic-design front, the game is stunning. While the sprite-based Kurt looks a bit dull, the environments feature incredible architecture, generating more than a few "ahhs" and "ohhs" during the course of play. The polygonal denizens of the gameworld are marvels of weirdness, as Shiny has made an interesting decision with them. Rather than try to replicate humans, they've turned them all into grotesques, with distorted features, long gangly legs, oddly shaped heads and Lord knows what else. You won't soon



Kurt follows the globe after spinning it off its axis

You want complex environments, you got 'em

forget them, that's for sure, especially after you've tagged them with a couple of hits and they limp around the room, oozing green blood.

The 3D engine that delivers the visuals is superb, concerned more with speed than complexity. That's not to say that it doesn't have many of the vaunted features of its competitors, but it's not an engine in search of gameplay. It would appear that Shiny designed it match the game, not the other way around. And they've rewarded those lucky enough to have a 3D accelerator card with Direct3D support, taking the excellent visuals to a new level.

With MDK, Shiny has reinvigorated the genre, delivering a wholly original game that doesn't resemble any other one on the market. Compared to the average shooter, the lack of multiplayer negatively impacts replayability (something shared with Tomb Raider), but if you play games to play games, MDK is a killer single-player experience. Not to be missed. –Steve Bauman

MDK

Playmates Interactive Entertainment • www.playmatestoys.com/pie.com • Requirements: DOS, Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

Need for Speed II

Living up to its name

hroughout the ages, teenagers have used their cars to score with the opposite sex. They'd try to impress them with their Hemi's with Hurst shifters, saying things like "My car does the quarter mile in 11 seconds." Consider today's equivalent: "Hey, I've got a 200MHz MMX Pentium at home, and an ISDN connection to the Net. Wanna check it out?" Boom. You're in there.

Perhaps the ultimate make-out game is *Need for Speed II*, because it combines the allure of fast cars and a fast PC. Of course it features exotic cars: The McLaren F1, Ferrari F50, Lotus GT1 and Esprit, Ford GT90, Jaguar XJ220, Isdera Commendatore 112i, and the Italdesign Cala. Many of these are concept cars and aren't available to the public; the rest are only in the price range of id Software programmers.

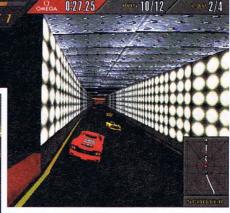
More importantly, it requires the fastest Pentium on the planet to run at a decent frame rate. Unfortunately, it could have been made a helluva lot sexier with a 3D card, and it also might have actually run on something less than a Pentium II.

Need for Speed II also turns out to be a dud



in the handling department. The cars have no steering feel on either the simulation or arcade settings. You don't feel the car breaking loose, and every car understeers at the limit, ramming those invisible barriers that still keep you from exploring the beautiful scenery that surrounds the tracks. And when will Electronic Arts start giving us a few more tracks to drive on – six, plus one hidden track, is unacceptable in a \$50 game.

Considering more people worked on the video segments than the actual game, it's not surprising that *Need for Speed II* is all



[top to bottom] "Ridin' around in my F50..."

Even without an accelerator, the visuals are quite good. Too bad they're slow...

image and style and little substance. The original game, with its greater variety of gameplay (where are the cops and oncoming traffic?), was much better. – Steve Bauman



Need for Speed II

Electronic Arts • www.ea.com •
Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium
or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM •
Multiplayer: 2-8 players, IPX, modem, nullmodem

ARE STRATEGY GAMES TOO [No. 1] [Mar. 1] [Mar. 2] [Mar. 2

Blood

Build engine game provides gore and not too much more

t seems as though 2D/3D shooters are having something of an Indian Summer after suffering through a *Quake*-induced cold snap. *Outlaws, Redneck Rampage* and *Blood* have all hit the streets at about the same time. Each offers a different strength: *Outlaws* has its immersive storyline, *Redneck Rampage* has its lowbrow humor and *Blood* has...well, blood.

Gameplay is the same as it always was for these kinds of games. As with all Build engine games, you have the basics plus crouch and jump, look up and look down (perhaps those are part of the basics now?). Mouse targeting is a toggle key.

Developer Monolith set out to shock and revolt you from day one. The ads (y'know, they guy lounging in a bathtub full of blood) have been upsetting moms since they appeared. And, as promised, the game literally drips with gore. Founts of blood spurt from everything you kill, decaying bodies hanging from hooks explode in gobbets of meat when

you hit them, and still-living beings are crucified on walls. The whole thing is so over the top that it ends up being like a B-movie gore-fest – more silly than scary. Still, plenty of folk are going to be offended.

Once past the blood-hook, though, the game is a mixed bag. The environment graphics are poor. The aforementioned crucifixion victims look like murals painted on the walls, though they still scream when you stick 'em with your pitchfork (the default weapon). Enemy graphics are much better, though still not outstanding. Sounds, on the other hand, are excellent. From the zombies mumbling "More brains" to disembodied voices from the past crying out their messages, sounds add much to the Blood experience. One of the few truly creepy moments in the game comes when you step up to an altar and hear whispered voices chanting something that you can't quite make out.

The level design is clever. Lots of thin walls to blow open, rotating rooms, and "theme" levels (an abandoned ship and a moving train are among the highlights). The atmosphere feels like late 19th or early 20th century with (for example) the voice of a conductor crying out "all aboard" though he's been dead for many years. Find key A to open door B to find Key C which you need to

59 26

[top to bottom]

Milliseconds ago, that pile 'o gore was a rat The fish are better armed than you are! I hate leftovers...



open Door D seems to be the order of the day, that and the odd switch throwing.

Weapons range from cool to "been there, done that." The flare gun will lodge its flare in an enemy's chest, which doesn't even slow him down. A few seconds later, though, the flare ignites and said enemy becomes a walking inferno before collapsing in a pile of ash. Sticks of dynamite are a standard, and can be used to open many secret passages, as well as re-killing bad-things around corners. Spray cans can be used as flame throwers, and the ultimate weapon is a voodoo doll. Less interesting are the shotgun, tommy (machine) gun, and rocket launcher.

Blood is a tough game. Often (too often, sometimes) you'll come around a corner to find a hair-triggered enemy with a shotgun pointed at your chest. Boom, game over. Save, save and save is the order of the day. Even the wimp level can provide some decent challenges. The game is made even tougher by occasional clipping problems, wherein you can see your enemy past a corner, but your gun insists on hitting the wall rather than the enemy.

As with *Duke Nukem*, a level editor is included. Also as in *Duke*, this is a no-frills Build editor that will take a lot of patience

and experimentation to learn to use. No one has yet come close to Bungie's Hammer and Anvil editors that they provided with *Marathon Infinity*. Perhaps Epic's *Unreal* editor will finally bring decent editing tools to the PC platform.

This is the case where a game suffers somewhat from being over-hyped. Lots of us were salivating in anticipation, and at first blush, the game fails to deliver. But setting aside the hype, *Blood* is yet another decent 2D/3D shooter. It isn't genre-busting, but it'll keep you covered in gore for a while...at least until this 2D/3D Indian Summer fades before the fully 3D fury of *Jedi Knight*, *Unreal* and *Prey. – Peter Smith*



Blood

GT Interactive • www.gtinteractive.com • Requirements: Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, IPX, modem, null-modem

TigerShark

Perfect for short sessions of mayhem

hen's the last time you sat down for a session with a straightforward shooter? Forget multiplayer, level editors and configurable keyboard schemes, just shoot stuff. Been a while? Then *TigerShark* is for you.

TigerShark takes place both on and underwater. Your vehicle is part hovercraft, part submarine. On the surface, things are simple. You drive around wasting bad guys. The only tricky bit is taking into account the motion of the ocean, since your guns fire straight forward. You have to fire on an upswell to hit distance enemies or emplacements on land.

But underwater it's a whole 'nother ball game, as the controls available expand considerably at the same time that you have to start thinking in 3D. Using a Microsoft Sidewinder Pro, the game supports the throttle, the rudder twist is used to bank your craft, and the hat slides you left and right and up and down (no view options, but remember, this is a shooter, not a sim). The game is tough, even on a medium setting, so you'll want to get really good with

these controls.

Skim along the bottom and you'll see the broken hulks of the ships you took out on the surface. The sea is

crisscrossed with torpedoes. Huge subs fire those (and you can trace the trail of bubbles they leave back to the source), but there are also smaller "fighter subs" that make life problematic. And let's not forget the lava!

TigerShark looks good normally, but throw a 3Dfx accelerator card into your rig and it become spectacular. MMX is also supported, but the developers got a bit ambitious, and there's pretty bad slowdown in MMX mode. This may have been caused by the currently dubious DirectX support of MMX.

Setting aside the MMX problem, TigerShark is a quite enjoyable single-player shooter; it's the kind of airy stress relieving fun that won't keep you glued to the PC for hours on end, but will provide many short sessions of mayhem before you grow tired of it. –Peter Smith



Destroy these thermal taps and you'll get a power-up

▼ On the surface, the nearness of the horizon is a bit disconcerting



TigerShark

GT Interactive • www.gtinteractive.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 66MHz Pentium or higher, 16 MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

OR, PERHAPS, NOT

RSSKY

ENOUGH?

Extreme Assault

Extreme action for explosion junkies

lue Byte has been making some impressive waves in the U.S. as of late, especially with the release of Albion and the superlative Archimedean Dynasty. Extreme Assault is a follow-up of sorts to the latter game which, while unrelated to its story and aquatic world, uses an improved version of the same engine. It also shares the same basic control scheme and many of the same qualities that made that submarine combat game so great.

Extreme Assault takes to the skies and the ground, as you pilot a souped-up arcade style attack chopper and a fast, deadly hover tank. This isn't a sim by any means; there are power-ups, secret bonuses, end bosses and all the old standards of arcade action. Indeed the premise of using a helicopter and tank in the same game is far

from original – the illustrious *Silkworm* series (look for *SWIV* from Interplay any day now) used this same idea years ago. Not that originality matters a whit while you're playing *Extreme Assault*, since the sheer visceral action of the game will keep any joystick jockey glued to his or her chair for hours at a time.

In Extreme Assault, rumors (then confirmation) of an alien invasion send you out on mission after mission through a variety of landscapes both above and below the ground. Vast tunnel chambers, alien

factories, lava pits, small towns and forests are all waiting to be blown up in pursuit of the foul aliens who wish the Earth for themselves. There are enemy helicopters and fighter jets, gun turrets, jeeps, giant robots, mechanical spiders, drones and air mines to overcome by the hundreds, and several different guns and missiles to find, power-up and utilize. The game contains around 50 missions, and most of them are short and explosive. The game automatically saves after completion of a mission as well, and while there is no option to save during a mission, it isn't much of a problem. There are four difficulty levels, but the game is structured so that you can only see the later areas on the harder settings, which is an obnoxious feature.

While Blue Byte has made assurances that 3D acceleration patches will be available soon (if not already), the graphics are some of the best ever seen in an non 3D-accelerated game. Often times, the game looks as if it is accelerated, and the explosions and light-



ing are beautifully done. Textures do, however, get quite blocky at times, occasionally marring the otherwise superb visuals. *Extreme Assault* has a plethora of resolution and detail options to allow it to run on a variety of systems, supports MMX and though it is DOS-based, runs perfectly under Windows 95. The sound effects are terrific as well. Explosions and gunfire carry a noticeable punch, and the music complements the action quite nicely. *Extreme Assault* contains network play for four players, with four battle zones in which to fight, and is due to support play over the Internet through as yet undetermined Internet gaming services.

Control for both vehicles is super smooth and responsive, but the game lacks proper support for advanced joysticks (it does have a Thrustmaster mode). The game does not allow the use of the throttle or rotation of the Microsoft Sidewinder Pro, and forces the player to use keys and joystick simultaneously, which is an oversight. There are some other annoying holdovers from *Archimedean*

[top to bottom]

Traverse the canyon in a gun turret infested alien camp

No alien blastfest is complete without a big mechanical bug to blow up

Extreme Assault's fire and explosion effects look as good as any 3D-accelerated game

Dynasty as well, such as the way you can end the mission as soon as the main objective is cleared even if there are still enemies around. Some of the missions must be done in a specific manner or else you can't win them and your commanding officer's voice (by the same guy who did such a great job with Archimedean Dynasty's hardboiled science fiction narrative) is woefully over-dramatic here.

None of the problems in the game can take away from the fun of playing Extreme Assault. It's pure mindless action with excellent, stunning looking levels, a huge explosion count (virtually everything in the game is gleefully combustible) and it's simply an enormously entertaining game. For action lovers, Extreme Assault is a must-have and is simply the best game of this type around. –Jason D'Aprile

Extreme Assault

Blue Byte Software • www.bluebyte.com • Requirements: DOS, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, IPX only

Perfect Weapon

Not quite perfect, but an action-filled surprise

erfect Weapon is the kind of game that PC owners don't usually see. A cross between a traditional fighting game and an Alone in the Dark-style third-person adventure, it only lacks variety and an interesting story to elevate it to PC greatness.

The plot concerns a guy who's landed on a planet where the aliens just happen to practice the martial arts, and in order to leave he must kick butt in five strange worlds. Sure, it's pretty lame, but this same plot was featured in over 32 movies in the past three years, all starring World Kickboxing Champion Don "The Dragon" Wilson and appearing on Cinemax next week.

As you move about the beautifully rendered environments, you find power-ups that open doors, give you extra strength, and all of the usual stuff. As you defeat an enemy, you absorb their essence, and after vanquishing enough foes, you'll be able to advance to the next level.

What makes *Perfect Weapon* more than an average fighting game are some nifty little design features. Over the course of the game, you can learn more advanced

moves, over 100 in all, though most require the dexterity of a 12 year old. The different aliens all have distinctive fighting styles, and unlike most games of its ilk, you're not just in one-on-one battles.

The negatives of *Perfect Weapon* are few, but still annoying enough to effect your impression of the game. It suffers a lot from "sucky camera angle syndrome," which, as in *Alone in the Dark* and *Ecstatica*, can cause you to completely lose your bearings when the game decides to go from, say, a side-view to a top-down view. They also make navigation cumbersome for the exact same reason. The player animation is a little clunky, and shadows on the characters, even if faked, would have helped them to integrate into the backgrounds better.

Overall, *Perfect Weapon* is a surprisingly entertaining and challenging game, one that should provide plenty of action for fans of the genre. If you're not a fan, it might make you one. –*Steve Bauman*





[top to bottom] Hey, if you had a bad haircut, you'd be pissed too Attacking the deadly tattoo guys



Perfect Weapon

ASC Games • www.ascgames.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 120MHz Pentium or higher, 8MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM Multiplayer: None

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Road to Nowhere

Dinos and Dilbert at DreamWorks

ipe your face," he suggested. "Huh?" "Your face. It's smudged," (indicating the left side of my nose). I dutifully rub it. "Arrrrgggghhhh! That's worse! Here." (handing me a tissue). "It's the escalator handrails, they have black powder and no one knows why." Black powder on the escalator handrails... OK... I can accept that. After all, I was at DreamWorks Interactive - a huge cauldron of big talent, hot licenses and development dollars. If it's escalator powder they want, it's escalator powder they'll have. During an editor's day there recently, every last employee assured me that it's a great place to work. "...and they give us donuts, and lunch, and coffee and soft drinks!" Not a word about profit-sharing or stock options. They know what the priorities are.

Nonetheless, there are two products I saw there worth mentioning that don't fit neatly into one of our iron-clad genres. (Three, actually, but the Neverhood's Skull Monkeys for PlayStation only is off limits for discussion via the magazine's Statute of No-Cart-Discussion, "Fart-head" weapon or no "Fart-head" weapon...you didn't read about it here).

First is a real-time strategy game. Yes...I know this is an iron-clad genre that we do cover (how many in development at last count?). This one is for kids. Chaos Island is the Lost World product aimed at kids aged 8-12. These are the ones that watch Dad or big brother playing Warcraft and Red Alert and see the addicted look on their faces. They want to become addicted like Dad, but after the "build four farms" type of level they become quickly frustrated and overwhelmed.

The game offers 12 missions very closely tied to the Lost World film (rescue a baby T-Rex, herd a group of dinos from here to there, etc.), and all of them are "positive" in nature. No mass carnage. No wiping out every blasted unit. Pabulum for most of us, but

enough to inspire a whole new generation of insomniac computer geeks. Easy, medium and hard levels are available.

Character-driven gameplay enlists many characters from the film, all voiced by the original actors. They gain attributes and abilities as the missions progress, giving

an incentive to keep them healthy. Dinosaur eggs may be found and hatched to build dino troops (remember C&C's dinosaur level?) The dinosaurs are gorgeous, as they are in all the Lost World games, and have 15 distinct attributes per species. Here is where much of the very basic strategy comes into play. The dinosaurs behave much as they might have in the wild, so knowing their tendencies enables the player to use tactics like directing herbivore troops to eat trees to clear more fortuitous paths.

No cartoony or babyish overtones here; it looks so much like C&C (except much prettier), that most of us just smiled and shook our heads - from the status bar under each unit, to the left button interface, to the style of the inter-mission cut scenes (I actually expected to see Kane). But hey, like the tobacco companies, hook 'em early enough and you've got a consumer for life.

DreamWorks has scarfed up a license to

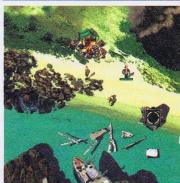
[clockwise from top]

Shadows of tiny dinos reveal their species

Note the C&C style

Character screen





yet another institution - that gotta-lovehim corporate engineer, Dilbert. Yes, Dilbert, Dogbert, Catbert, Ratbert and the pointy haired manager all make appearances in Dilbert's Desktop Games. It consists of these tiny little characters with big heads that run through mazes finding items and bringing them to other characters...er...no. Sorry Lucas Arts.

Instead it is a series of 10 separate games. There is an overall mission – to complete the ultimate Game Machine, which requires playing all of the desktop activities to accumulate its pieces. Games range from lightactivity style (Enduring Fools, which covers your desktop with morons, buffoons and idiots that you zap with a stun gun and mess up your screen) to full scale level-based arcade games (Techno Wars - complete all 50 levels and you'll get that last piece to the Game Machine).

My personal favorite is The Jargonator, which takes any perfectly normal prose you feed it, and returns it in middle-management gobbledygook. It changes things like "use" to "utilize" and adds bunches "expedites" and "facilitates" all over the place. I can't wait to try it out.

Scott Adams has complete creative control over the project, which is being developed by Cyclops in Santa Monica. DreamWorks is trying to get Bill Gates to sanction the product, hoping that he will soon require "A Dilbert on every Windowsbased machine." Well, perhaps not, but at the suggested retail of \$19.95, what a great holiday gift idea.

So, there's plenty afoot this year at DreamWorks... and if only they could stop folks from replenishing the toner on the escalator handrails, it could be Eden. -Cindy Yans



Rubber stamp your desktop with over 70

Techno Wars - donuts are at stake

Boots of Re

Express delivery for The Last Express

ello, again! Toaster, the dragon who looks like Bogart, is having an identity crisis and is unable to continue his stories. I know you'll join us in wishing him a quick recovery from his prolonged period of insanity. He is having a great deal of difficulty in dealing with the death of Beata, his beloved Polish sweetheart, y'know. Meanwhile, pull up a bar stool, and have a mug of ASCII on the house. That means you'll have to climb up on the stool, and then through the ceiling to get it. Heh-heh. This is the Boots of Re Tavern and I'm Unca Andy. My three helpers are Bashed, Battered and Bewildered. On tap for today are this month's most popular adventure and roleplaying games as listed in Hot & Not as well as the major hints and tips needed to complete my favorite adventure game of the year, The Last Express.

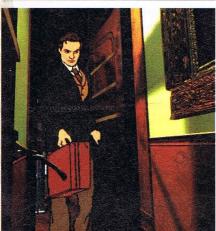
Hot & Not

Shadows Over Riva was the month's most popular role-playing game, but Diablo continued to do well. Shivers II was once again the month's most popular puzzle adventure game.

The Last Express

Some gamers are reporting difficulty in beginning the game. They keep getting

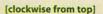




notices that Robert Cath has been arrested and booted out of the game. Herr Schmidt begins the game in the dining car and sends a conductor to invite Whitney Tyler to meet with him there. Unless the gamer (as Cath) talks to Schmidt before he tires of waiting, Schmidt will leave the dining car and discover Tyler's body. This triggers the police to board the train at the next stop and arrest Cath. The best way of preventing this is to go to Whitney's compartment and discover the body first and hide it in the train seat (it makes up into a bed) and then go to the dining room to talk to Schmidt. Click the conversation balloon on the conductor right after boarding and he'll direct you to Whitney's compartment.

The first arcade sequence, a fight with a knife-wielding assailant, is not as difficult as it looks. The trick is to move the cursor around the screen to discover the down arrow which allows Cath to duck, and then click the hand icon which appears after a few defensive ducks if the cursor is on the assailants arm. You can end the first day around 10 p.m. after Whitney's body has been safely thrown out of the window. The cursor will turn into a snore balloon when it is run over the made up bed.

The little boy will trade his golden whistle



Disarming the assailant is easier than it looks Look at the egg as if it were a globe of the world

Boldly carry the briefcase of gold out of Kronos' private car





Hide the body in the train seat

for the black beetle crawling on one of the chairs in the lounge car. This is not an arcade sequence as I mistakenly thought at one time. It is a puzzle involving your empty matchbox and the beetle.

Gamers are also having problems with finding the golden egg (in Tatiana's bathroom), the passkey (in Miss Wolff's jewelry box) as well as how to trick Schmidt into delivering the arms at Munich. Do not sell the egg to Kronos for the briefcase of gold. Instead, use the passkey to climb on top of the roof of the train during the concert, drop down into Kronos' private car via the skylight, and get the briefcase out of his safe. Then just boldly walk out of his private car and hide the briefcase under your train seat and then hide the egg in Max's cage. After the concert show the briefcase immediately to Herr Schmidt in his compartment and then give it back to Kronos.

Defuse the bomb by first opening the electrical box next to the conductor's chair. Close the fuse box and slide the cigar box to the top. Use a match to burn through the insulation on the wires. Remove the box and turn it around to remove the pins from its hinges. Open the box and place the telegram between the relays.

To open the egg, follow the clues in Tatiana's translation of the Firebird poem. Look at the egg as a globe of the world and press the aqua-colored gem in Ayers Rock, Australia. Then press the blue gem at Stonehenge, England. The third gem is red and it's at Mr. Everest in Tibet/Nepal. The fourth is purple and is in the ocean off the coast of South America on Easter Island. Finally, press the green gem in Jerusalem.

Selemat tinggal (goodbye in Indonesian)

-Andy Backer

Star Trek Generations

Marathon meets the Enterprise

hile it is unclear whether development time, or simply the wish to distance itself from the rather unfortunate movie, was the motive for the delayed release of *Star Trek Generations*, it's hard to deny the marketable appeal of the *Star Trek* license. This latest adventure of the Starship Enterprise is vastly different from any that have come before it and from the movie as well. Using the film's plot as the barest of threads to form a siz-

able action-adventure, Star Trek Generations is the latest of the current crop of games attempting to meld first person action with adventure game elements (Realms of the Haunting being a previous example).

The game manages to echo the movie plot in a commendably long adventure, as the crew of the Enterprise find themselves in a race to prevent a mad man from destroying much of the galaxy in his quest to enter the Nexus, a strange, paradise-like place. The madman, Dr. Tolian Soran, is using a new star destroying weapon, which when activated causes the star to go nova and anything in the wake of the blast to turn to atoms. The most interesting aspect of Generations the game, however, is not just the length or the plot, but the nonlinearity of it. If you fail in an away mission, or lose in space combat (and survive), the plot usually still progresses. Even in the away missions, actions can have consequences, though what this usually means is that you shouldn't use

the maximum setting of your phaser, since it turns aliens and any of their sometimes imperative possessions into a pulpy mix of space debris.

There are three distinct elements in *Generations*, though the bulk of the game is made up of first person, real-time adventuring. The other segments are the starship combat sequences and stellar cartography. Stellar cartography is sort of the captain's chair of the game – here Picard and Data scan star systems in search of clues to the mad doctor's whereabouts and issue commands to send crew members on away missions. Since Soran is always on his quest to destroy the galaxy, time is important as well, so following up on false leads can cost you.

[clockwise from top]

Geordi prepares to inflict the hurt on a room full of Klingons. Who knew the lyrics to MacArthur Park would survive that long?

Stellar Cartography, where Picard and Data plan their next move

In some away missions, you'll be using disguise and stealth instead of firepower

You'll have to battle both Romulans and Klingons in space to reach the mad doctor





It's an interesting premise and works well enough most of the time, but there are some noticeable problems. First, the away missions can easily be mistaken for the aging first person shooter, *Marathon 2*, and the graphics are not exactly stunning. The game's look is certainly passable, however, and the variety of landscapes, from caves and planet surfaces to starships, is interesting. Also, the viewing window is quite small, even using the large option. Control for the away missions might take some getting used to since it deviates from the norm by using the control key for ducking and the enter key for jumping.

The starship combat portions are easily the weakest segment of the game. It's as if





the designers weren't sure whether they wanted to make these battles tactical or arcade-like, then tried for a middle ground and failed. You can control the Enterprise either manually or through commands (such as "Maintain distance to target," or "Evade"), but neither option is intuitive or particularly user friendly. Indeed, an option to skip these battles entirely would have been welcome. Another odd oversight is the fact that after saving an away mission-in-progress, you are restored at the beginning of the mission for no apparent reason. Given that some of the missions are long, puzzling and difficult this is a terrible oversight.

All in all, Star Trek Generations is a decent game, especially for Trek fans. The game allows you the chance to take the role of all the main cast members (though only one at a time and you can't choose away team members) and is involvingly interesting science fiction fare. The mix of action and adventure works well overall, though it is, without a doubt, aimed more at action players than adventure gamers. —Jason D'Aprile



Star Trek Generations

MicroProse • www.microprose.com •
Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium
or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM drive •
Multiplayer: None

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Shadows over Riva

Third time's a charm for this Euro-fantasy series



n an era that glorifies light-weight, action-oriented games passing themselves off as RPGs, it is refreshing to see that someone is still keeping faith with the legions of hard-core role-playing fans out there. Sirtech, creators of the legendary Wizardry series of honest-to-goodness complex CRPGs, continues that legacy with its other line of serious role-playing games, the

Realms of Arkania series. Produced in Germany and based on a paper and pencil role-playing system popular there, the first two Arkania games enjoyed success in the United States. Star Trail, the second game in the series, was particularly well received, for its mix of incredible detail. masses of statistics,

and well-executed, traditional dungeon-crawling and turn-based combat. Now, amidst the barrage of adventures, 3D shooters, and action games with RPG elements, Sirtech has released the third chapter in the *Arkania* saga, *Shadows over Riva*.

Like its predecessors, Shadows over Riva offers a plethora of delights for the numerically inclined: detailed character generation, a myriad of skills, more spells than you can shake a wand at, and the chance to buy virtually anything your adventurers could want (including visits with courtesans). What's new for this installment is SVGA cutscenes and animations, a somewhat refined interface, a much improved 3D adventuring environment, and better music. Players can import their parties from earlier Arkania games, use a pre-generated party, or create their own group of six adventurers; in the latter case, new characters begin at sixth level, so as not to be at too much of a disadvantage. Most everything will be quite familiar to veterans of the earlier games, including the emphasis on brothels, massage parlors, and other pleasures of the flesh that seem to obsess the designers. Likewise, the quirky jokes, odd translations, and general weirdness of the earlier games returns full force for this encore.

The game fits on one CD (something of a rarity these days), has a good manual (printed and on-line) and is reasonably bug-free. According to the box, it will run on a 486/33, so it should be accessible to virtually every RPG fan. In many ways, Shadows over Riva

[clockwise from top]

Automapping with style...color, overview, and notes all make it easy

A Dwarven mine provides the setting for one of Riva's many adventures

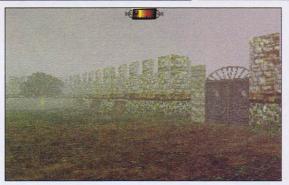
The Cemetery...great 3D graphics lend atmosphere to Riva's terrors

Inventory management made easy...and boy, you need to manage this!









represents what may well be the last of a breed: the highly-detailed, statistics-oriented RPG that requires minimal hardware and focuses more on the game than on glitz. Of course, too much minimalism is not necessarily good. Combat is still blocky VGA, as are most of the interface screens; battles in particular would have benefited from higher resolution graphics. The 3D parts of the game, though gorgeous, are not particularly fluid; the ability to use the mouse to look around would have made exploring Riva much more entertaining. And yes, there is still that Teutonic obsession with such minutia as eating utensils, styles of footwear, and quality of bedrolls to drive you batty. At least there isn't much opportunity for everyone to catch the flu and die this time... Players who are not familiar with the series might be a bit overwhelmed by everything, and there is too little information about such mundane things as weapons and armor for

those who have not mastered the earlier games.

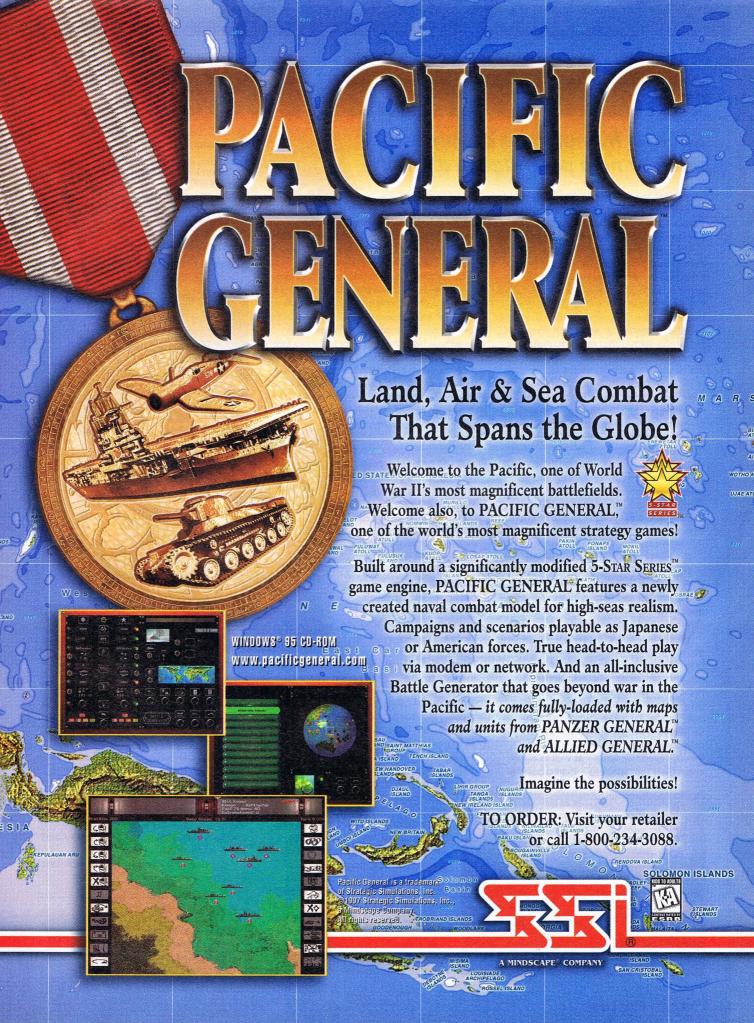
Still, Shadows over Riva is a winner, a solid statistics-based RPG in an era of lightweight imitations. There is nothing quite like the thrill of building a party, developing it over time, and kicking monster butt all the while. Despite being set in a single city, there is no shortage of things to do, and places to see. The city of Riva looks fantastic; maybe Europeans have a

better idea about Medieval architecture than folks on this side of the pond. Most of all, it's fun, that sort of "print out the character sheets and let's figure out what spells to work on" fun that serious RPGers have come to know and love. It's not a game for everyone; those who shun trigger-based plots, hate minutia, or simply want pure action and SVGA sizzle should look elsewhere. Replay value might well be limited, too, due to the very linear plot structure. These are relatively minor flaws, however. Given the current RPG environment, *Shadows over Riva* is still a ray of sunlight for fantasy gamers. *—Robert Mayer*



Shadows over Riva

Sirtech • www.sir-tech.com • Requirements: DOS, 486/33 or higher, 8MB RAM, 2X CDROM • Multiplayer: None



Callahan's Crosstime Saloon

Boomer humor, tons o' puns, story galore and a partridge in a family

f Callahan's Crosstime Saloon included a book, I would have followed what was becoming a ritual with Legend's games: read the book, play the game, consider the differences/parallels. Since I'm not a big science fiction/fantasy reader aside from this ritual, I can't comment on how true the game is to the Spider Robinson spirit. I am a big adventure player, though, so I can say that Callahan's is an adventure for the rest of us – that forgotten group sick of Myst-alikes, hungry for games that refuse to dumb down, and relieved when humor hits us where we live, not over the head.

"Saloon" notwithstanding, Callahan's isn't a Western. Rather, it's an Eastern, set in an unusual Long Island bar where beings from different times and spaces can hang out in the now. From this base, your player character, Jake Stonebender, steps out into Five Vignettes and a Finale; saving rainforests, making the world safe for testosterone, helping broken-hearted, addicted, and dognapped pals, and orchestrating the endgame – all in a forgiving environment that eschews the dreaded "game over" for infinite second chances.

The perfect Callahan's audience grew up in the 60s and 70s U.S.; lives there still (+10 if it's New York); loves music, movies, words and wordplay; and fancies him or herself a discriminating gamer. In other words: me. Callahan's and I connected on a level that might elude those schlepping different baggage. Example: if you don't know in your heart that puns can be the highest, not lowest, form of humor (whatever slimeball coined that phrase was misnaken, anaconda they're Newt easy toad do without being a boa), run far, far away. Puns abound in Callahan's. Younger or non-U.S. players may miss some references to TV shows, ads, bands - even Hair lyrics - as well as events and names that speak to a shared boomer

past. Our shared present, too, becomes surprisingly amusing, from an annual report joke to one character's *Fargo* accent. And the hysterical New York City segment hit, and hit hard, in the verisimilitude department.

I should disclose that I know Josh Mandel (only online), and have played other games that were, at least partially, his brainchildren (Freddy Pharkas, Space Quest VI, to name but a few). To me, Callahan's shows measurable growth on his part, or perhaps just more freedom to use his own style. In Callahan's, that style combines endearing self-consciousness with risk-taking originality, and is pleasingly obsessed with detail (but not the locker room). Just about everything in the game generates

some sort of response – usually non-canned.

Callahan's is heavily textual and requires careful reading to solve puzzles and to experience the story cohesively. Your comrades' many suggestions amount almost to online hints, but without the guilt. The puzzles, while generally fair, are sometimes bizarre (why did I have to buy wax lips before knowing how to use them?) The in-game clues are quite well done, though occasionally I

relied on structural feedback instead (e.g., inability to use an item except where I found it). Also well-handled: the sparing use and seamless integration of "I'm a puzzle!" puzzles like the Brazillian lock. Oh, and trash that bundled hintbook immediately. Doing so got me about 30 playing hours – less if I hadn't missed some smaller items.

The conversation interface didn't annoy me, but might others. It frequently spits you out at an option's end and makes you talk to the subject again to continue. Used conversation options don't gray out. This allows replays, which I liked, but can be frustrating if you hit a used option accidentally.

Callahan's features 360-degree scrolling (like Zork Nemesis but easier to control) which provides a natural-feeling journey through the familiar Legend cosmos. I did experience a bug: a disappearing option with those wax lips. The problem did not recur when I played from a prior save.

[top to bottom]

I Like Mike, and the other characters wormed their ways into my heart, too (time for my monthly pill)

Great Aunt Jenny?!? No (whew)... just the local purveyor of yentagrams, the latest in curse mark fashions (they look really cute on, take my woid)

Don't even think of parking here





None of the other glitches affected gameplay, just atmosphere (e.g. characters reciting lines not intended for them). On my system, the music slowed significantly during screen changes, and the sound frequently carried an undercurrent of popping – so I could not fully enjoy these aspects of the game. Hopefully, patches will fix such issues.

Callahan's won't impress those who expect breakthroughs in animation or visual effects; even full-motion video is all but absent from this game. But for me, and others like me who value playability, story, and intelligence above ocular diabetes, Callahan's is a find. Just gimme a book next time, OK? –Morgana



Callahan's Crosstime Saloon

Take 2 Interactive • www.take2games.com • Requirements: DOS, 486 DX2/66 or higher, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM

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Activision (Adventure) Release Date: NOW PC CD \$46

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Interplay (Roleplaying)
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The Hangar

Confirmed Kill: Is it real or is it vaporware?

'Il admit that my favorite computer activity is playing WWII on-line air combat games. I'll also admit that I have yet to find the one that really makes me feel as if I'm flying the fighters of my boyhood dreams. That's why, like so many other gamers, I've eagerly awaited Eidos' Confirmed Kill. Hope springs eternal: maybe this is "The One"?

My similarly afflicted gamer-brother asked me to help take his Vultee BT-13 trainer roundtrip from San Francisco to the Nellis Air Force Base airshow in mid-April. I accepted immediately and realized this would also be a great chance to drop in on Eidos and determine the status of the long-awaited online project.

Although they were in the middle of a move to new, larger office space, the Eidos team was more than eager to show off their progress. *Confirmed Kill* does exist and is very close to a public beta. The current tentative schedule for the beta is August of 1997. Bryan Walker, simulations producer for Eidos, talked at length about the delay in the game's release and their plans for it.

According to Walker, the largest obstacles to release have been Windows 95 related. For most of the development period, the DirectX and Direct3D code from Microsoft has not, in Eidos' view, been solid enough to develop and support a high-end flight simulation. The result was "temporary" programming while they waited for better code. DirectX 3A arrived in early '97; its improvements allowed programming to progress beyond "proof of

concept" work. In April, the DirectX 5 beta arrived. and Eidos feels that this version meets their minimum requirements - there are clear improvements in the performance and memory issues that were holding up the process. Walker expects the final version of DirectX 5 in late

June with a *Confirmed Kill* beta following as rapidly as possible.

There have been non-programming problems as well. Eidos has allied with Total Entertainment Network to offer *Confirmed Kill* to the 'net market. As usual with on-line game companies, TEN's rapid growth caused some difficulties. Since *Confirmed Kill* was stalled by the DirectX situation, dedicat-



Confirmed Kill in action – with the newest version of DirectX the last technical hurdle may have been passed, but business issues remain to be resolved

ed resources were shifted away from the project to deal with more immediate problems at TEN. Now that things are settling down, the game is receiving more attention and all should be ready for a thirdquarter debut. Additionally, TEN changed its business model to a "flat-rate, unlimited play" program. That made it necessary to revamp all the hourly contracts previously established between Eidos and its

suppliers and contractors. The

result was a three month legal wrangle that has just ended.

This legal rodeo was part of the reason that Alan Weiss has taken over administrative control of Confirmed Kill. Bryan had been simultaneously trying to bring Flying Nightmares 2 to completion while developing the Confirmed Kill programming and handling all the legal work. It was too much for one man to do, so now Bryan handles design issues and Alan does the contractual work

on. As a side note, the Flying Nightmares 2 and Confirmed Kill groups are separate; the only shared work is in graphics, with both games using the same graphics engine. The flight models, weapons modeling and game design are different. Walker firmly restated his intent not to release Confirmed Kill as a "work in progress". You won't have to wait repeatedly for the "next version" to finally

get torque effects or flap drag modeling.
The flight model, graphics engine and
gameplay/design will be complete before
you begin paying to play. It is a modular
design, however, and new aircraft and missions can and will be added easily.

The last obstacle that the game will have to clear is the business model. Eidos estimates that if 200 players fly 24 hours a day, seven days a week at \$2 per hour it will take five years to recoup *Confirmed Kill's* development budget. According to Bryan, the game was never intended as a huge money maker – its job is to establish Eidos' place in the on-line market. When that market finally matures and begins to show potential, Eidos wants to be a well-known name. Still, *Confirmed Kill* will have to show some promise to justify its expense. There will be a retail version at some later date and this will be critical to the game's success.

It isn't vaporware and you shouldn't have much longer to wait to judge for yourself.

–John Nolan



Bryan Walker at the controls of a Flying Nightmares 2 Harrier

Air Combat Advisor

Part III: Making the Boom 'n' Zoom work

[top to bottom]

Unless you have a major E advantage over your enemy the climbing Zoom extension (red path) won't work. In reality the majority of Zooms you'll execute will be in level or slightly descending flight (green path)

If your computer driven AI enemy is firing at you, know that you're still approximately within striking distance. Most enemy AI will not waste ammo most of the time (he knows exactly how far away you are)

elcome back from the land of abstract numbers. Last time we discussed the theory behind the counting method for Zooming. As I'm sure you've probably discovered by now there's quite a difference between Zoom theory and actual Zoom execution. Before we get back to our Zoom extension calculations, let's discuss some more of the problems you're probably encountering thus far.



The most common problem you're likely to run across while Zooming is trying to follow the textbook Zoom – a climbing extension. I'll be up front about this – unless you have a major E (energy) advantage over your enemy, it won't work and you'll get your tail chewed into tiny pieces. While you may get away with such a Zoom on your first and possibly second pass (again, only if you have the E), the odds are very much against you doing it again without some serious E grabbing beforehand. The reality is the majority of Zooms you'll execute will be in level or slightly descending flight.

Reality bites

Okay, I know you're saying it takes too long to regain E (climb) if you dive in your Zoom. This is true; BnZ'ing isn't wall to wall action

By switching to the in-flight map/radar screen (if your sim has one) like this one in Pacific Air War:1942 during your extension, you can gauge your separation. It's not exactly realistic, but neither is the flat, 2-dimensional view you get through a monitor screen so use it if you've got it



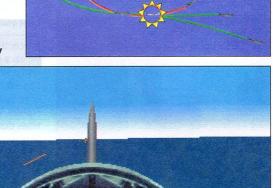
like Turn 'n'
Burn dogfighting. It takes
skill and above
all patience to
be a good
BnZer.
According to
some
accounts (and
I only got this
third hand

because I wasn't around in WWII), unless warranted by a mission objective(s), BnZ attacks were little more than a couple passes at the enemy then everyone ran for home. This was regardless of whether all bandits were killed or not (especially if the odds weren't in the attacker's favor). It was very rare for pilots to hang around until the bitter end if there was no real good reason to do this. This may sound pretty boring for air combat sims, but the alternative is hanging around and getting shot down with little hope of emerging victorious. While you think about that, let's get back to calculating the Zoom extension.

Live and learn

Unless you're using the Map method described below, as we mentioned last time,

calculating Zoom extensions is a bit more of an art than a science. Let's talk about what this means. As previously discussed, after the merge begin counting to 30 before beginning your reversal, but don't take that number as being written in stone. One tip for dealing with computer driven Al (who knows exactly how far away you are): you can be assured that if you can see his tracers firing at you, he's approximately within striking distance. Enemy Al will not waste ammo



most of the time. Even if you've reached the magic 30 count already, continue your extension if you see tracers being fired at you and you have the E to get away.

Reversing now would be a mistake.

On the other hand, if you turn and find the enemy in your lap, extend your next Zoom by ten seconds, plus an additional five for every 50 KIAS (knots indicated air speed) slower you've become. Eventually, you'll work out some guidelines/system that'll work for you or at least will let you know when you're in trouble. While that may sound useless, the real benefit comes from learning when you're headed for trouble before you're actually in it. Not as good as a kill, but very valuable nonetheless.

Map the gap

The next method relies on the accuracy of an in-flight map/radar screen if your sim has one. I call it a radar screen because these maps show you information that would only be available from radar or satellite information. By switching to these maps during your extension, you can gauge your separation. Not exactly realistic, but neither is the flat, 2-dimensional view you get through a monitor screen.

Turn to kill

You've probably noticed that you yield relatively few kills BnZ'ing exclusively. If you want to increase your kill to bullet ratio (and who doesn't?), you're going to have to turn with the bandit sometime or another. The secret is knowing when it's (relatively) good to do so. We'll talk a little about that next time.

Until then, remember our BnZ motto – we came, we emptied our guns, then ran like hell. –*Ben Chiu*

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

"She's got it where it counts, kid"



ne of the first things to understand about X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is what it is not. It is not X-Wing 2 or TIE Fighter 2. It's not a souped-up single-player extravaganza set in the Star Wars universe. It is not a vehicle for LucasArts' narrative skill at threading together an ongoing story with a series of missions. It is not the end-all and be-all of deathmatch space fighter combat. It will not make your coffee in the morning, fix you up with hot dates on Friday night, or bring you untold wealth and fame. Once you've let go of any exaggerated expectations, you can appreciate X-Wing vs. TIE

Fighter for what it is: a solid and entertaining multiplayer space combat game that could have been better.

First, the bad news. Not only could this game have been better, it could have been a lot better. In the past LucasArts has done a phenomenal job of living up to, indeed exceeding, pre-game hype. But perhaps the honeymoon is over and it's time for gamers to cast the same cynical eye towards LucasArts that they have for the rest of the industry. The first indication that all may not be well

in this galaxy far, far away is the appearance of a gaudy "Totally Games" logo that looks like the "Biff" and "Pow" graphics from the Batman TV series. This is the company that Lawrence Holland, the creative mind behind X-Wing and TIE Fighter, formed to develop X-Wing vs.TIE Fighter. Where Totally Games' contribution ends and LucasArts' begins is anybody's guess, but someone, somewhere fumbled the ball and kept this title from being as good as it could have, indeed, should have been.

There are a number of annoying short-comings. Taken alone they aren't significant, but there are enough of them to add up. For instance, when you enter hyper-

I got one!

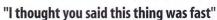
space, the effect of blurring stars is missing. When a game loads, the progress bar fills and empties multiple times. There is no speech behind the mission briefings. Many of the missions are directly ported from TIE Fighter. There's little variety to the sound bites during gameplay. There are no Death Star runs. There's an annoying two and a half minute wait before an unsuccessful TCP/IP connection times out. Customized missions are difficult to set-up and limited by the available scenarios. The two disks that come with the game are mislabeled. All these details indicate that corners were cut. While they certainly don't kill the game, they'll leave many players scratching their heads wondering what LucasArts was thinking when they let this sort of sloppiness fall through the QA cracks.

"Stay on target... stay on target..."
But the biggest problem with X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is a lack of shape, a feeling that there's no structure, nothing holding it together from inside. The included missions

superior ships. The game may as well be called A-Wing with Advanced Missiles and Chaff vs. Advanced TIE Fighter with Advanced Missiles, a Tractor Beam, and Chaff.

This wouldn't be so bad if the system for score-keeping were more clearly defined, encouraging players to pilot weaker ships with less advanced weaponry. But the scoring is poorly explained and seems to only take into account success or failure regardless of the tools you use. The kills, which determine your pilot's rating, are also poorly explained. Nowhere in the manual does it mention the difference between a kill (inflict at least 2/3 of the damage), a partial kill (inflict at least 1/3 of the damage), and an assist (a possible result if you inflict less than 1/3 of the damage).

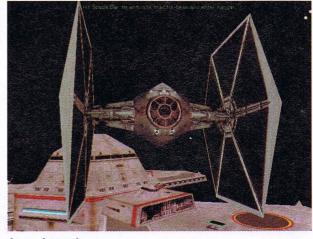
The physics of "flight" in X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter have been completely revamped since the earlier titles. The ships behave as if they're moving through an atmosphere, requiring slower speeds for tighter turns. Although some might complain that it's now just a flight sim without gravity, this is a necessary concession to playability. Coupled with the excellent power management scheme and advanced targeting commands, this is by far the most sophisticated yet playable space sim available. Any attempts at "realism" would probably make for a less enjoyable and ultimately forgettable game. Do you remember the Microsoft Space Simulator or MicroProse's Mantis? Me neither.



The improvements to graphics are mainly the addition of texture mapping to the polygons, which takes its toll on frame rate.



are simply scattered at your feet for you to pick up one at a time, in whatever order you like, using whatever ships and weapons you like. In a head-to-head combat, there's no reason for players to use anything less than the best. This doesn't do justice to the spirit of the Star Wars universe in which the Empire throws masses of cheap TIE Fighters against a handful of the Rebellion's



[top to bottom] It's away! We'll have to destroy them ship to ship

Lucas Arts' claims that this engine is so fast that it doesn't need accelerator support are nonsense. This is especially troublesome in multiplayer situations, where poor connections between mid-range computers are intolerable enough. Although the game theoretically supports four players over the Internet (via Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone, direct TCP/IP connections, or network emulators like Kali), even getting three players connected is an iffy proposition. Fortunately, there's been enough kvetching that Holland has promised a patch to improve Internet connections and provide 3D support by mid-August.

"The force is strong with this one"

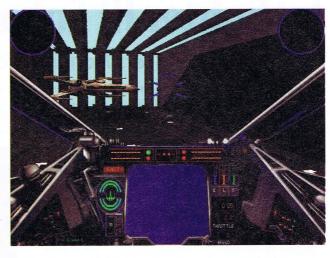
Which brings us to the good news. X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is, hands down, one of the

most exciting multiplayer games you'll play, if you play it right. One-on-one combats are pretty dull (turn, turn, turn, shoot, turn, turn, turn, shoot, repeat ad nauseum), but coordinated team missions, whether cooperative or competitive, are uniquely satisfying. There's nothing like leading a squadron of Y-Wings for a proton torpedo attack



ply depot from Imperial Gunboats. See how little you care about the game's shortcomings while you're protecting your friend's TIE Bomber squadron from marauding A-Wings with concussion missiles, hoping the power in your jammers holds out until they can get off their bombs.

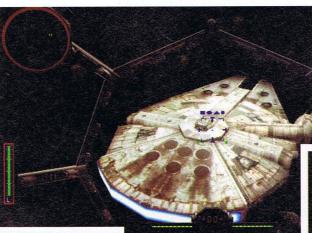
For a long time, multiplayer gaming has meant multiple players plugging themselves into a vacuum and slugging it out between themselves. Games like *Quake* and *Descent* have made the term "deathmatch" synonymous with "multiplayer", but *X-Wing vs. TIE*



aggravating stutter when the tracks change) as John Williams' stirring music trumpets from your speakers. At long last, your advanced controller suites will be fully supported (with the exception of rudder pedals and a roll button that doesn't want to configure very well). You get two disks (careful with those labels) so you can play a friend with only one copy of the game. Listen to the unique sound cues for different engines at different speeds. Play with a variety of new weapons and countermeasures (but even fewer ships than were previously available). And as you play, you might even discover the occasional nice touch (for a little surprise, try flying behind a capital ship's engines).



X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is not perfect, but it works well enough to provide all the excitement of watching the movies. Assuming this is what LucasArts set out to do, so in this regard, they've succeeded admirably. Now witness the power of an (almost) fully armed and operational multiplayer space combat simulation. –Tom Chick



[left to right]
I have you now
They're coming in too fast!
They'd be crazy to follow us

against a Star Destroyer, knowing that your buddy is curled up in a TIE Interceptor, trying to punch through your defensive screen of computer controlled X-Wings. There's a delicious terror when your opponent gets a missile lock and you're in a TIE Fighter that's about as sturdy as a Christmas tree orna
"I've ma

ment. I defy you to hold your heart rate

steady with another player as your wingman

while the two of you fight to defend a sup-

Fighter allows players to join something much larger, more epic, more frantic, more confusing, more tense, more exciting. Something just plain more. You may not realize how much is going on until after you've been killed and you find yourself

watching the rest of the battle from the map screen, biting your nails like a nervous Princess Leia during the Battle of Yavin. This sense of activity is what makes X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter truly special and what ultimately redeems it from its shortcomings.

"I've made a lot of special modifications"

But wait, there's more! You'll hear redbook audio at its finest (complete with the



X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

LucasArts • www.lucasarts.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, Internet, LAN, modem, direct serial

Jetfighter III Enhanced Campaign CD

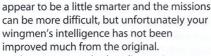
More battles and jets from Mission Studios

here is new conflicts in the world and the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) has been called into action in this add-on mission disk for *Jetfighter III*. New to the sim in this package are the F-14 Tomcat fighter and Phoenix air-to-air missile as well as over 5 million miles of new terrain in the Pacific Northwest and Far East. There are two new campaigns included: Seward's Ghost, a ten-mission foray into Alaska, and Dragon Slayer, a 64-mission operation in China and Korea.

Besides all the additions there have been substantial enhancements and fixes made in this version, some of which were already available in previously released patch. The entire joystick calibration routine has been completely revamped, making it easier to use and adding features such as afterburner control on the throttle. Manual targeting has been improved as well, making it easier to designate targets not stored in the mission plans. There are also more subtle changes, such as actual pictures of targets and threats in the briefings of the new campaigns and a working autopilot.

Missions are very similar to the original with a good variety of air defense, strike and CAP missions. As in the original game there are several missions that are unique; taking

out a propaganda-spewing radio station and protecting the Alaskan pipeline make for very different combat assignments. Enemy pilots



There are several other disappointments with this add-on disk as well. The much hoped for 3D video card patch is still not ready, though Mission Studios is hoping to have such support available very soon. Another glaring omission is the lack of multiplayer options, making this product probably



Rapid Deployment Force carrier group
 F-14 preparing for carrier take-off

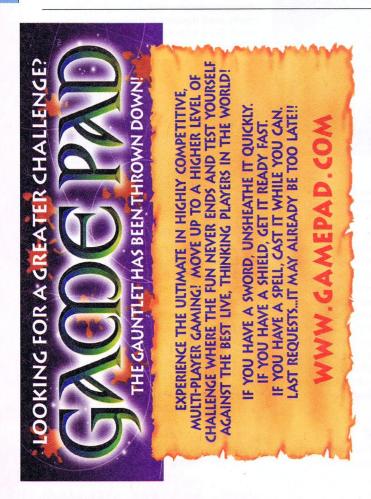
the only major recent sim not supporting such features. However, if you

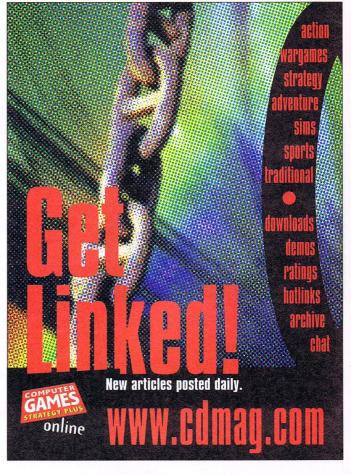
enjoyed the original and like flying by yourself, this add-on has plenty going for it with intelligent and well-designed missions and plenty of airspace to cruise in. -Jim Pedicord



Jetfighter III Enhanced Campaign CD

Mission Studios • www.missionstudios.com • Requirements: Jetfighter 3 • Muliplayer: None







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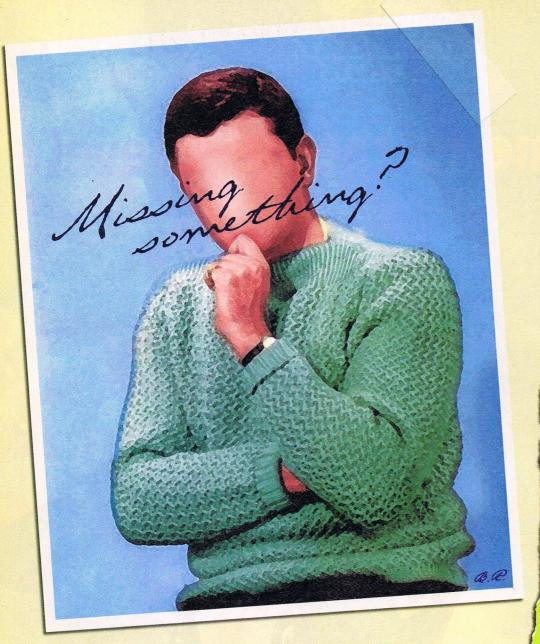
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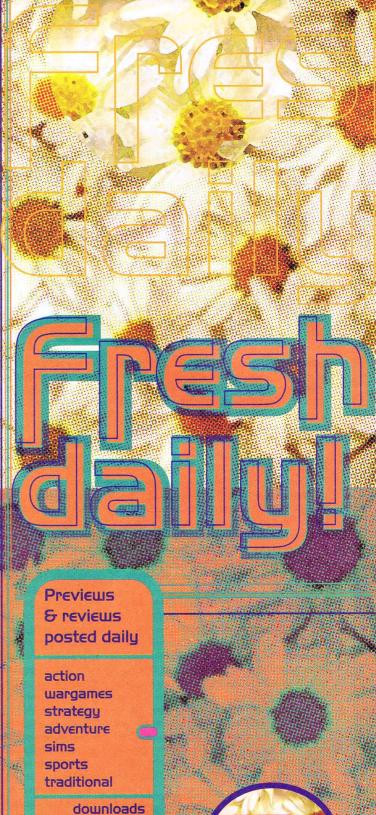
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Comanche 3

A beginners guide to stealth and weapons



omanche 3 is the latest sequel to NovaLogic's line of helicopter simulations. The enemy aircraft and ground vehicles in this simulation are numerous and deadly. This article contains hints and tips which will help you to master your Comanche.

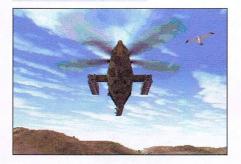
Make the most of your stealth

The Comanche is designed to survive on the battlefield thanks to its LO (low observable) or stealth characteristics. Successful pilots (*i.e.*, pilots that regularly complete their missions) are those who use these characteristics to their best advantage. The trick to beating the opposition is to remain undetected until just before you are ready to attack.

Fly low. The lower you fly the more difficult it will be for the enemy to detect you. Generally speaking, you should never fly much higher than tree-level. Obviously if you feel safe flying lower than 25 feet, do it. When entering large open areas it's often safe to engage your altitude lock and drop down to 15 feet or less.

Use terrain to your advantage. Keep elevated terrain between you and the enemy at

Beware of the seagulls; not just any "Easter egg," they can damage your 'chopper all times. The enemy can't see through solid objects



nor can radar waves pass through them. Flying down dry stream beds and gullies is an excellent way to stay hidden. The military calls this Òterrain masking.Ó

Be sure to keep your weapon bay doors closed at all times. Your chances of being detected on radar are greater when the doors are open.

Your weapon bay doors open automatically when you fire a weapon that is stored internally. Just remember to close them

manually by pressing the <F> key when you're through firing. The word BAY appears in the lower right corner of your HMD when the doors are open.

Some missions require you to fly with

EFAMS (External Fuel and Armament Management System), large non-lifting stubby wings that have several hardpoints for loading stores. Flying with EFAMS is equivalent to flying with your bay doors open. They give you room to carry more ammo but increase the likelihood of detection. You cannot jettison EFAMS so be prepared to complete the entire mission in this distinctly nonstealthy condition.

Another thing that spoils your stealth characteristics is flying with your landing gear extended. There's no reason to have your landing gear deployed once you take-off. Check the lower right corner of your HMD. If you see the word GEAR, your landing gear is down. As soon as you leave the ground, press the <G> key to retract your wheels.

The enemy has a more difficult time spotting you at night. (Radar and IR sensors continue to function normally, however.) When flying night missions, don't silhouette yourself against the moon. The enemy will definitely get a visual on you if you inadvertently become a lunar eclipse.

Choose the right weapon for the job

The Comanche is no shrinking violet – it carries a formidable array of weapons.
Unfortunately, in order to minimize its radar signature, the Comanche stores all its weapons in internal bays. While this

arrangement makes it harder to spot, it also limits the number of rounds it's able to carry. The trick to getting the most from your weapons is knowing what ammunition to use and when.

AGM-114 Hellfire: By far the most lethal weapon you possess, it is specifically designed to penetrate armored vehicles, but it can be used against hardened structures, even flying targets, as well. Usually, one hit from a Hellfire is enough to destroy a target. While they are powerful, they are slow. Firing a Hellfire at a target that is far away gives the enemy plenty of time to shoot back. Another drawback to relying on the Hellfire is that there are never enough of them around when you need them. Use these weapons sparingly. Even when a FARP (Forward Area Rearming Point) is nearby you'll manage to launch all your Hellfires and be caught wishing you had just one more.



Hydra-70 mm FFARs: Your 70 mm Folding Fin Aerial Rockets are second,

Use terrain masking to approach targets; here the hills surrounding the reactor protect us from almost all ground-based and many airborne threats

only to the Hellfire, in terms of lethality. These rockets do a lot of damage and they spread this damage over a greater area. They are most effective against soft-skinned, unarmored vehicles and un-reinforced structures. Because they lack penetrating power, rockets are least effective against armored targets like tanks and APCs. Rockets are slow (although faster than the Hellfire) and have (at their maximum) a very short range. The biggest drawback to using rockets, however, is the fact that they are unguided. Your only aiming mechanism is the I-beam pipper that appears on your HMD. Once you fire a rocket, it's gone. Rockets are quite good against other helicopters.

External views can help you track your fire, and evaluating mission replays can help you analyze your methods

AIM-92 Stingers: The Stinger is a heatseeking air-to-air missile. It is primarily used to shoot down enemy helicopters and aircraft but it can also be used (with limited effectiveness) against ground targets. While the Stinger is a Ofire and forget Oweapon (by virtue of its IR guidance) it lacks the precise accuracy of the Hellfire and the explosive power of a 70 mm rocket. (Always fire these missiles in pairs. It usually takes several hits from a Stinger to down an aircraft.) You can fire these missiles against ground targets, but don't. Stingers are less effective when launched against targets that are below you. The warhead is simply not strong enough to do much damage. For these reasons, the Stinger should never be your weapon of choice. Launch them at air targets you encounter very early on in a mission. You'll want to save your good weapons for the really important mission targets you encounter later.

The 20 mm Cannon: The chin-mounted 20 mm cannon is a three barreled ÒGatlingÓ type gun. As you might imagine, it's your most versatile weapon. It is effective against all types of targets, from hardened structures to aircraft - it's particularly devastating when used against soft targets like trucks or fuel tanks. Although it lacks the range of a Hellfire, 70 mm rocket or Stinger, at close range the cannon is the weapon of choice. It has a limited supply of ammunition (500 rds.) and boy, does it go fast! Conserve ammunition by firing the cannon in two or three second bursts. Besides having a limited ammo supply, the cannon has difficulty firing at targets which are higher than you. This sometimes

You've taken out the ground targets; now take out the Hokkum with either a couple of Stingers or, if it gets close enough, rockets or your cannon

The cannon is also less





accurate the faster you fly so if it seems that you are frequently missing targets, switch to the <F6> external view. This view gives you a better look at exactly where your rounds are hitting.

Artillery: One of the most powerful yet over-

looked weapons at your disposal is artillery. Artillery can reach anywhere on the map with devastating results. Best of all, using artillery to strike a target doesn't give your position away. Once the mission starts you can check on the status of your artillery by pressing the key. Remember, when you call for fire, the rounds impact at the location of the TD box when the call is made. For this reason, artillery is best used against static targets. If you need to call artillery in on a moving target (a column of tanks, for instance), be sure to target the lead vehicle. When the rounds begin falling they'll be landing on the back half of the column.

Teammate: Your Teammate (Griffin Two Seven) is an important force multiplier if used correctly. Two Comanches are able to deploy more weapons in a shorter period of time. This allows you to establish fire superiority early on and cut down on the amount of return fire you'll suffer. Your Teammate is less concerned with stealth than you are. He likes to rush in after targets and draw fire. If you see that the enemy is pre-occupied with your Teammate, it may be a good time for you to make your move on the objective.

Fun stuff you might have missed

Designers and programmers like to show their sense of humor by hiding things in the game and leaving it up to you to find them. See if you can track them down.

Seagulls: Several missions in campaign four include a flock of seagulls near your starting point. They can represent a hazard to flight operations. They can damage your helicopter if they fly into you. Although your TADS will not target these birds, you can shoot them with your 20 mm cannon or rockets.

Sharks: Campaign four includes a couple sharks just in case you were considering going for a swim. Check out any wrecked ships you uncov-



in campaign three that has a soda machine outside one of the buildings. BBQ'd Beef: Remember the cows in F-22

Soda Machine: Thirsty? There's a village

Lightning II? Use your cannon to light 'em up and your Team Mate will wonder out loud just what the heck you're doing.

Tips from the testers

Here are some assorted hints and tips that have been collected from Team NovaLogic Comanche 3 playtesters.

Use TRGT HOLD mode: This mode allows you to Oripple fireO your missiles by automatically advancing to the next target once your current target is destroyed. Try using this mode when confronted by a group of targets. You can also cycle through the selected targets and delete any unwanted ones with the key.

Chain Reactions: Try to take out multiple targets with a single shot. Look for opportunities to set off chain reactions (explosions that carry over to new targets).

Artillery Strikes: Don't forget to use up your allotted fire missions. Coming home with fire missions remaining is a waste.

Conserve ammo: Unless there is a FARP nearby, always be conservative when it comes to firing ammunition. You have a limited supply and it goes quickly.

No matter how many flight simulations you've played in the past, Comanche 3 takes time to master. Flying a helicopter is a difficult job, but it's also extremely rewarding. So, here's a little reward to get you over the rough spots: This is designated a "Radio Cheat" (Single and Co-Op play). Type <R> during the game, then enter the COWZ, and time freezes for 30 seconds for all non-human players.

Use the hints and tips presented here to assist you in developing tactics and techniques of your own. Pretty soon, you'll notice that you are able to win your Comanche 3 missions on a regular basis. -Lawrence T. Russell

[Russell wrote the manual for Comanche 3

British Open Championship Golf

It all falls apart on the putting green - now that's realism

S. cyber-duffers might think they've tuned in to ABC when they first boot up *British Open Championship Golf*. That's because Jim McKay, the voice of sports on ABC for as long as this reviewer has been watching has lent his presence to the product. That fits in perfectly with developer Looking Glass' promise to provide all the pageantry of the real British Open in their new golfing product. And, for

the most part, they've made good on that promise. Only two courses are provided with the game, The Old Course at Saint Andrews where the Open got its start, and Royal Troon, where the modern tourney is played, and there is no course editor. Looking Glass has plans for additional courses eventually.

As befits the title, players will join a full four day tourney

(options for shorter tournaments or single games are provided, as are a few game variants). The course graphics show the gallery, the TV towers, and all the accouterments of a high profile golfing event. It's a sharp contrast to the solitude of a *Links LS* or *Jack Nicklaus 4* course.

What really matters, though, is what the game provides when you step onto the first tee. *British Open* uses the standard three click swing pattern. The marker speeds up as it travels along the swing path, making a dead-on accurate shot much more difficult than in any of the other golf games out there. There is not much forgiveness in the swing meter, which makes *British Open* a real challenge. Shot building is via stance and ball placement adjustment, and (eureka!) finally a golf game has a pre-programmed "bump and run" shot.

Looking Glass makes much of its "interactive caddie" feature. In practice, this is a canned selection of advice and background on each notable feature of a hole. While interesting, it is hardly interactive, and the advice given seems tuned to pro-level golfers. If you're playing at a lower level, the caddie will recommend shots that you can't possibly pull off (due to the decreased length of a lower level player's drives).

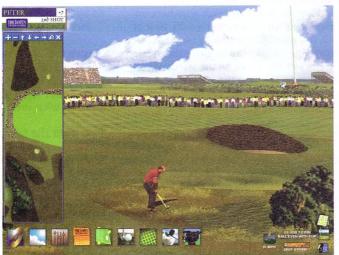
A truly interactive caddie would've been a

[clockwise from top]

At the start of each hole players get an overview of the challenges to come

The leader board appears between holes. The announcer just proclaimed "We have an Australian in the lead." Ooops!

Contours are way too hard to pick out



great help on the greens, where British Open runs into real problems. On the one hand, the putting swing meter has feet measured off on it - a pleasant surprise to those of us used to having "wing it" in competing games. On the other hand, reading the greens is next to impossible. The graphics are not detailed enough to indicate most breaks, and the grid is of almost no help, either. The voice announcers will sometimes help, saying something like "he'll have to aim well left to sink this one," but this is the exception rather than the rule. Worse is when they say "with this strong break he'll have a difficult shot here" and you have no idea which way the break they're talking about goes. This is an incredibly serious flaw that takes British Open Championship Golf out of contention for the gold cup.

Just to add insult to injury, there are a few other problems that exist throughout the game, but are most intrusive on the putting green. First, the aiming point matrix is way too granular, making fine tuning your aim impossible; in other words, the aiming stick jumps too far as you try to move it slightly. Also, you bring up the swing meter by clicking on the graphic of your golfer. If you want to aim at a point that is blocked by the graphic, you have to drag the aiming stick in from one side. It's all too easy to forget this

The 2nd hole introduces the player to one of the major weapons the Old Course uses against her adversaries, the bunker. This hole is often underestimated because much of the trouble lies concealed from the tee, and the green can be one of the most difficult on the course.

Par 4 411 yards

2 nd HOLE

and start a swing when you're intending to only aim.

British Open Championship Golf is rev 1.0 of this golfing engine. Those of you who've been around for long enough will recall these same kinds of problems in Links 1.0 and Jack Nicklaus Golf 1.0. This isn't offered as an excuse, but as a hope for the future if Looking Glass chooses to continue pursuing this genre under their own name (they've worked on some PGA Tour products for EA Sports in the past). It should also be mentioned that Looking Glass seems committed to patching the product, and a better putting grid would make a world of difference. As it stands now, the strength of this game lies in the course modeled. Listening to what the commentators and the caddy have to say about each hole will give you a deep understanding of the course. For those of you who just want to play some golf, though, Links LS and Jack Nicklaus 4 are better choices. - Peter Smith



British Open Championship Golf

Looking Glass Technologies • www.lglass.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 60MHz Pentium, 12 MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: Hot seat

Ten Pin Alley

The finest bowling game on the market



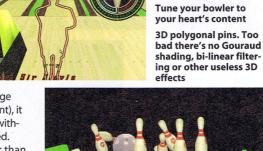
owling. On your PC. Hey, quit giggling. You probably play golf on your PC, don't you? PC golf games are an apt comparison for *Ten Pin Alley*, since it shares the approach of those more socially acceptable sports games in that it tries to simulate something that

requires timing and skill. Using a three-stage power meter (spin, power and release point), it manages to replicate the skill of bowling without being impossible or overly complicated.

But it is incredibly challenging. Rather than go with canned animations or a bunch of preprogrammed outcomes like *Alley Cats* (still the finest strip-bowling game on the market), *Ten Pin Alley* has a full 3D physics model that calculates ball speed, rotation and lots of other things that cause pins to fly. They're quite impressive to watch, though it sometimes looks like they cut away from the pins too fast, just as that final pin is about to fall.

Visually, the game looks appropriately stupid, though that in no way should demean the complexity of the simulation. The game uses wacked-out 3D polygonal graphics to represent the bowler, though tragically they elected not to support Direct3D (that, of course, was a joke). The music is incredibly cheesy, mimicking the impression one has of a real bowling alley (it ain't like that in reality, but who cares, because you'll turn off the music after a few minutes anyway).

With Internet play (just type in the IP address



bowling interface in all

of its glory

of the server and you're off), leagues, tournaments and really big hair, *Ten Pin Alley* is astonishingly good. While bowling on your PC is ultimately a bit repetitive (more lanes, with varying quality surfaces, may have helped), at least you don't have to wear ugly shoes in order to play it (Hawaiian shirts are optional). *–Steve Bauman*



Ten Pin Alley

ASC Games • www.ascgames.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 75MHz Pentium or higher, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-10 players, Internet



"This game is SUPER. If you want to sleep, don't play Baseball Mogul. You won't be able to stop."

- Pierre Dumont, player

"It's extremely difficult to stop playing. You feel like you're behind the GM's desk, making calls, barking out orders, and then watching the results. The still photos for news events and city shots were well done and added to the richness of an all-around high-quality sports strategy game."

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Hercules Stingray 128/3D

The Rush arrives

here are two schools of thought concerning 3D accelerators, and both of them are right. The first comes from companies like Diamond and Orchid, who, with their Monster 3D and Righteous 3D respectively, feel that users like having two separate cards for their video needs, that gamers on the whole are happy with their tweaked (or not) 2D performance and don't want to dump their current cards just to get 3D. The other school suggests that users don't want the hassle of having to deal with

two cards, two sets of drivers, and the annoyance of upgrading drivers for one card and having to readjust the other (it happens). The 3Dfx Company figured this out a while ago and dubbed their all-inone solution the Voodoo

Rush. The first such card is Hercules' Stingray 128/3D. This is a 6MB (two just for textures) monster of a card with a 128-bit Alliance ProMotion-AT3D 2D/3D graphics & multimedia processor to handle the 2D stuff and, of course, the Voodoo 3Dfx chipset for maximum 3D performance.

That said, it's important to note what this card isn't. It isn't the next generation of the 3Dfx chipset. The only differences between the Rush and the standard Voodoo chipset is that a Rush card can perform 3D acceleration in a window and it requires a new version of the Glide application that is used in all 3Dfx games. Programs that use this new Glide (currently v2.3) are compatible with both chipsets, but despite previous information to the contrary, the Rush board cannot use games that were done with the old Glide, which would be any 3Dfx game released prior to May of this year. Since they've gone out of their way to get as many Rush game patches as possible, this shouldn't be a problem for the most part. Some games, however, seem unlikely to be patched, and while it's doubtful any one will cry over the lack of a Starfighter patch, the lack of a Rush version of MechWarrior 2 is unfortunate. At press time, patches for

Descent 2, POD, Tomb Raider, GL Quake, VR Soccer and Whiplash are all confirmed. Most other older games should have patches as well by now (check both the game's site and 3Dfx's patch site, www.3dfx.com, for more information).

In terms of 3D performance, the Stingray performs as it should – equivalent to the 3D-



only 3Dfx cards, which is to say "awesome."
The 3Dfx chipset is inarguably the best 3D hardware on the market for gamers at the current time. So good, in fact, that it's used in the arcade now. Direct3D support is excellent as well, and even with the

current shipping drivers, overall performance is essentially the same or very close to its 3D-only counterpart. 2D performance is equally as impressive. The 128 bit AT3D provided results that generally stayed at around the same level as Hercules' exceptional 4MB Dynamite 128/Video. On the test machine (a P200 MMX system with 32 Megs RAM), the Build engine games such as *Redneck Rampage* and *Shadow Warrior* had frame rates that stayed at around a stable 27-30 fps at 640x480. The drivers could, at this writing, still use some optimization to tune their performance.

The Stingray 128/3D comes with two full games and a demo of LucasArts' Shadows of the Empire (the Nintendo 64 title, a trend this writer hopes will continue). Psygnosis' bet-



[top to bottom] Formula 1 on the Rush looks good enough to make PlayStation owners cry

Pandemonium lacks texture filtering, but still looks sharp and has plenty of old fashioned hop n' bop gameplay

MotoRacer GP, one of the few games that runs accelerated in a window. Hopefully, it will be out by the time you read this



ter-than-the-arcade formula racer, Formula 1 is stunning on the Rush (though it requires you to manually delete the old Glide file in the game's directory in order to play it) and a superb pack-in choice. The other title, Crystal Dynamics' Pandemonium, is a more questionable choice – it's a solid platformer along the same lines of Sony's Crash Bandicoot (a 3D world, but only a 2D play field), is rippingly fast, but totally lacks texture filtering and the textures have a blocky and unrefined look compared to most accelerated games.

The bottom line? If you're looking for an all-in-one video solution for your gaming needs, this is simply *the card* to get; and will likely be for some time to come.

–Jason D'Aprile

Links LS 1998 Edition

THE ART a n d t b e SCIENCE of GOLF

Introducing the Links LS 1998 Edition. The forces of art and science have combined to produce a golf experience like never before. This new version of the Codie Award winning golf simulation is packed with over 25 new features! Here's just a few:



Brace yourself for lightening-fast redraws, main view in a window capability, and up to 8 additional "smart" camera views.

Notice the new waving flags, birds, airplanes and other background animations with up to 8 of your friends over expanded internet play!



Our course designers have given even more attention to detail including new water reflections, improved textures and enhanced sky backgrounds.









State of the magazine

Although I am sorry to see Steve Wartofsky leave your publication, I know that change is inevitable. I really enjoyed the work he did for your magazine and look forward to his endeavors in other parts of the industry.

As far as the "good 'ol times," all I have ever found in your magazine are the best reviews available and fantastic coverage of the whole computer gaming industry. Some other magazines seem to have gone the way of mediocrity and are afraid of telling us exactly what the games they reviewed are about and giving honest opinions about them. Although I may not always agree with a review, at least I know that the person reviewing it in your magazine has played it through and will give me an honest reckoning of what the game is about. This is the most important part of your magazine! You can change the layouts, amount of reviews, previews etc., but please don't change the high caliber of your reviewers! As in anything, quality over quantity!

I can honestly say that there is not a section of *Computer Games Strategy Plus* that I don't enjoy and read several times through. (well, some of the advertising can get pretty lame... what's up with the pages that have "advertisement" on the top? Duh!) Keep up the fantastic work.

Phil Batson Via Internet

Praise and hate-mail for July

It's late, and I'm a bit moody, but I would just like to say, your *Ultima Online* story, is the best I've seen.... Trust me, I've read *PC Gamer, Online Gaming Review, Gamespot*, and a few paragraphs in many other magazines and pages.

Great layout, great writing, YEAHHH!!! I hope to see your representatives out in the *Ultima Online* field. Till then...

Brook Seaton Via Internet

I thought that your article about *Test Drive*: *Off-Road* was inaccurate [*CGS*+ *80*]. The game is difficult to master, but after you do master the control the game becomes very interesting. The reward of bonus vehicles and tracks brings even more of a challenge. But, I guess Steve Bauman doesn't want to spend more than ten seconds on one game. Although the review did have some valid points, it was very biased from an ADD afflicted writer.

Clayton Parker Via Internet

Steve Bauman responds: You got me. I don't like math. I liked it in high-school, but once I got to college I decided to be a pretentious literary snob and tried to get an English degree, and... by the way, what does addition have to

do with Test Drive: Off-Road? Oh, you meant Attention Deficit Disorder... well, OK, uh, what were we talking about?

Online harassment

A topic of growing interest to many consumers of online games is the quality of customer service and enforcement of terms of service agreements.

3DO's Meridian 59 is a case in point. On one server that I know of, there is a small group of people whose admitted objective is to "destroy" the game and "get back" at 3DO. Among their actions (all forbidden by the agreement) are excessive killing, personal harassment, and sexual harassment including cyber-sexual assaults.

These environments are growing past the 'experimental' stage and are now commercial consumer products. Of interest to paying customers is the quality of customer service in response to the sort of problems outlined above and methods to achieve redress for these problems.

I think raising and investigating these concerns is something gaming magazines could valuably do for their readers.

David Colburn Via Internet

Well? Is this a topic you'd like us to explore? -ed

Loathe that violence

My son just bought a copy of your magazine and I find it extremely offensive. He is fearful he will be cut off, but that is not my purpose. The violent images you portray are extreme and dangerous. No wonder kids don't realize there are other ways to settle things. Your ad with the calf [Redneck Rampage ad -ed] was horrible and I feel that if your advertisers continue they should be prepared to take part of the blame the next time there is a tragedy involving young or unbalanced individuals who have access to these games. You have sold out to the basest instincts and least human. Shame on you.

Sue Schwab Via Internet

You should see some of the games. -ed

I just bought an issue of Computer Games Strategy Plus. I have to say that I find the games covered in the magazine to be repulsive! I'm not sure why you people like this stuff – it would surely have appeal to a limited audience.

Fred Bunch Via Internet

You should see the ads. -ed

Hi. My name is Nick Shahid and I'm 9 years old. I just got your magazine a couple days

ago. I got the demo Blood and some others. I loaded Blood up and I played a couple uh [sic] times and then I thought to my self, why am I playing this crap? I gotta admit that it was the most violent, nasty, most sickest game I've ever played. Then I thought what piece sucking crap made this game. I got Area 51 and Doom but there was something weird about Blood. Finally I found out that it was so realistic that I couldn't take it so I smashed the CD up and deleted it from my computer. Really when you walk around the levels I was thinking what would God think of this. All the levels look like you're in hell. I'll bet you that it was at least as violent as Carmageddon.

> Nick Shahid Via Internet

Blood is like a Disney game compared to Carmageddon. –ed

To laugh or not to laugh

A unique physical condition causes great amounts of pain to my person when I laugh. Giggles, titters, and chuckles easily double me over. Guffaws, chortles, and the like keep me in stitches... literally. For my own safety, I must never read Tim Royal again.

Peter Whitley Via Internet

I must admit I'm not a loyal reader of your magazine, but my brother is so I read his copy monthly. The first thing I find lacking in your magazine is humor. The second is organization. I feel like the reviews are scattered throughout the magazine.

John Novatnack Via Internet

The reviews are separated by genre; however, if you would rather see them in one section, like everyone else does, let us know and we'll consider making that change. However, others like the organization...-ed

My husband and I are grateful for your magazine. It saved us from buying *Privateer 2*, which we have heard from you and other sources is a waste of money. I like how your magazine is designed. It is very easy to understand. We now live by your reviews and we don't buy anything unless it has three stars. In the world of software, because you can't bring anything back once it is opened, your magazine makes our purchases a little wiser.

Kathy & Dave St. Martin Kenosha, WI

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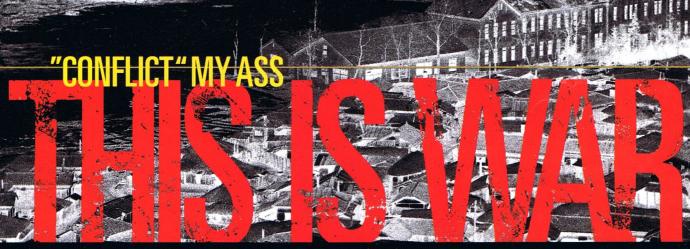
Send all correspondence to editor@cdmag.com Letters may be edited for space considerations

Computer Games Strategy Plus (ISSN 0955-4424) is published monthly by Strategy Plus, Inc. Subscription rate is \$19.95 for a one year subscription, \$31.95 Canada.

Periodical postage paid at Rochester, VT 05767 and additional mailing offices. Produced in U.S.A.

Standard Mail (A) enclosed in the following editions: 4 & 5 with CD-ROM. Bulk Rate U.S. postage paid, Pontiac, IL, Permit No. 79.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Strategy Plus, Inc., PO Box 469074, Escondido, CA 92046.

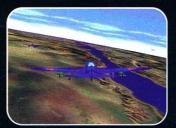


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